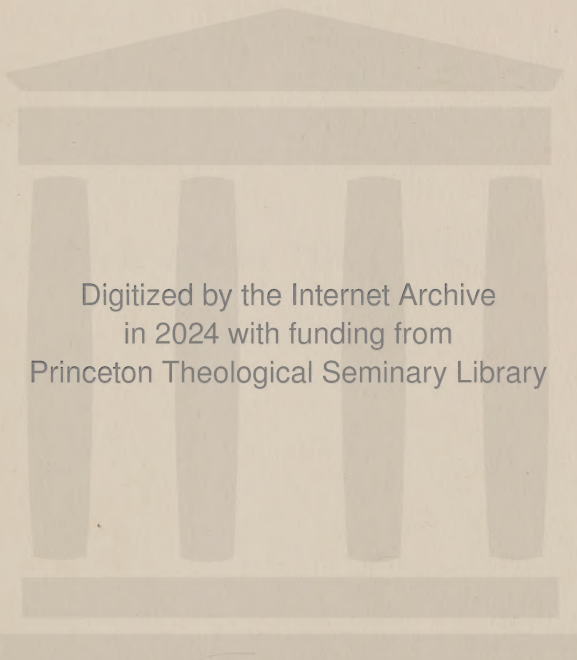


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THE CONVERSION OF THE CHURCH

The Conversion of the Church

BY

SAMUEL M. SHOEMAKER, JR.

Rector of Calvary Church in New York



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To
HENRY PARISH,
*Senior Warden of Calvary Church,
as part of my debt unpayable
for his loyal friendship
and co-operation.*

AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

A GOOD many ministers and workers in churches sit down with me in the course of a twelve-month, and talk about themselves, and their churches, and their needs. I try to share with them whatever part of my own life bears most directly upon them and their situation. But often I have longed to have the opportunity to say to them in a somewhat more complete form the most important of the things which I deeply believe about religious work today.

This past spring I began putting down some of the convictions which have grown up out of our work at Calvary Church, New York, where we have had the exciting and rewarding adventure of working out a "new" religious movement in an old local parish. Of course, there is nothing new in the Oxford Group Movement—it only believes what the Church believes, is only re-emphasizing the inwardness of the Church's message, and only does what the Church does at its best. It is simply the Church at work in the lives of individuals. I have been identified with the Group for fourteen years, half of which time I have spent at Calvary Church. I unhesitatingly say that the Group

is the Church on the march, and that every church should be a Group. The original Church was often called "the Fellowship."

When I speak of the "conversion of the Church," I mean the transformation of the often timid, ineffective, over-organized Church which we see and know, into the Church which Christ intended, the fellowship of His radiant followers, His brotherhood and His body. I believe that He founded and loves the Church, and gave to her His cause in the world. We must re-discover His will for the Church.

No one knows better than I the still remaining lacks in our work at Calvary. I only dare to speak personally and from experience because I believe that we are on the right line. So far as we have gone, I am happy over results. But there is still much, very much, to be done.

I hope that these beliefs may commend themselves to my brethren in the ministry of the Church, and that they may feel that I understand them and their problems, because I am one of them—and proud of it.

S. M. S., JR.

Calvary Rectory, New York.

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I

THE SINS OF THE CHURCH

HOW may the Church take hold again? That is a very large question, and one sets out to attempt an answer of it, in such a day as this, with a profound sense that he has before him a task which he cannot possibly fulfil without the continuing help of God. I therefore hope that those who read may be in much prayer with me that God's Holy Spirit may illumine us with His light.

I want to get right into the heart of my subject, and to tell you what I conceive the essential work of the Church to be; and then where I feel we have been failing in that essential work.

I believe that the primary work of the Church is the re-making of the inner lives of individuals, through the power of the living Christ. And so far as goes agreement with at least the first part of that statement, you will not find many to dispute you that the greatest need of our time lies in the discovery of some integrating force for human personality. Our day has found no mechanical short-cuts for the problems of personality. Education does its best. But there remain a great many people who need individual attention, some while still in school, some in later life. By and large they go to the psychiatrist. Fifty years ago

they would probably have gone to the parson's study if they went anywhere: but today the parson is busy. He seems to be in a hurry. People want a man with time. And if you have the price, and sometimes even if you haven't, there are intelligent men who know about nerves and complexes and many other interesting things we can have and will give us their undivided and intelligent attention upon our problems. Psychology is new as a science, but of course many of the "discoveries" of psychology have more or less always been known by intuition to great understanders of human life, and especially to great priests. The greatest thing in psychiatry, as in religious work, is an understanding heart, an interest in people which sees through their eyes, and loves them, and helps them to see straight, and gives them new faith.

Needless to say, this is not such work as can be done in off hours. A doctor of body or mind does not heal patients while he has nothing else to do. It will be quite impossible for a clergyman whose chief energies and efforts are drawn some other way to stop suddenly, and begin, in a few leisure moments, to deal effectively with a human soul in need. I think that the great practical apostasy of the Church in our time lies in her forsaking of the great function of "the cure of souls," so that this has fallen either into disuse or into other hands: while the Church is busy with other things.

Let us consider what those things are.

And first, a perfectly enormous amount of *pronouncement*. We write and we speak in order to keep before our people the characteristic set of ideas in

which religion is interested, especially as these relate to our present world. This is obviously very necessary. And yet I am convinced that the Church as a whole tremendously over-estimates the power of the printed and the publicly spoken word in this word-flooded generation. I am the minister of a New York City parish, and in general I preach once a Sunday. That sermon requires of me between six and twelve hours of work, beside the general mulling-over which may go on for years before one preaches the sermon. For twenty-five minutes several hundred people are within the sound of my voice. What comes of it? Our age is in a hurry for a "quick sale," and is apt to lose sight of how much is accomplished by preaching and religious reading, in the gradual enlarging of horizons, the extension of sympathies, the steady upbuilding of moral and spiritual convictions. Yet I often feel that my people's minds are tired—tired of the sound of words, tired of following an abstract train of thought. I am only sure that the sermon has struck fire when it brings someone to me in the porch of the church, asking to talk privately. And when I sit down with him, I find that the sermon is only a point of departure, and I must begin all over again and re-translate its real meaning into the terms of that individual's life. Here I can begin to convey to him quite a different kind of ideas: namely, stories of living people, people like himself, faced with just his problems, and therefore pertinent, not to life in general, but to his particular situation now. This is in the realm of "news," not "views." Someone said that it was a bad day for Christianity

when it got off the news-sheet into the editorial columns. And what a vast preponderance of religious utterance is sheer editorial! One is appalled to think of the time and effort which went into the statement, say, of the Anglican Bishops at Lambeth in the summer of 1930 upon most of the weighty matters of the hour: appalled at how few people ever saw the report outside the clergy and the already religious; appalled still more at how little difference it probably made in those who did read it. Most of it wise and good and true; but most of it also wearing an appearance of irredeemable abstraction to the common man. It is one thing to read what several hundred bishops think, for instance, of the condition of matrimony today; and quite another to know what to do when your particular marriage is going on the rocks. It is not the Church's primary business, as I see it, to make pronouncements about marriage; but to get to the people who are having marital difficulty, and change the people, and so change the marriage.

Again, we have put a terrific amount of effort into *investigations*. We had a great to-do during the war as to the want of religion in the men of the armies. Great masses of data were collected and sifted and condensed and published. Clergymen were edified, old ladies were horrified. People generally who read about it said it was just about what they feared: but the net result was to increase the sense of the terrible religious situation in which we found ourselves, rather than to tell us what we should do. Anybody in religious work today is pestered with huge forms which he is requested

to fill out and file in somebody's office. Some of this is needed for general church records. But not a little of it is for the satisfaction of somebody's lust for statistics; and some of it is grist for the mill of an aspiring person who hopes to get a degree for the pains of collecting evidence about something. One seldom sees the fruits of these labours. Even if they find their way into a book, it is not likely to set the Church afire. All this neat tabulation may be part of a diagnosis, but it can hardly be mentioned as a cure. The same thing is done with reference to religion in colleges: an open-minded gentleman appears on a campus, and asks permission to gather twenty likely youths and interrogate them on religion. It is found that these young men are rather nebulous in their ideas, the college chapel is sparsely attended, the Christian Association is only a moderate success, and there is widespread dissatisfaction with the way religion is being presented—all which we knew already. Did you see a delightful article in the February *Harper's* called "The Great Fact-Finding Farce"? The author, Lillian Symes, ends with this pertinent sentence: "How much more must we know before we can act?"

Again, there is a similar amount of energy expended in the huge number of *organizations* which the Church must support and keep functioning. Awhile ago I read a book in which I found the entire organization-schedule of one local church. It read like a railroad timetable. My head swam. I wondered what St. Paul would think of the whole thing. If you counted the number of people who went into the doors each week,

it would reach into thousands. But I kept wondering what went into the people. Did any of the ministers and workers have any time or energy left over for human beings when they were through greasing and tending this towering machinery? It was all built up to help somebody. Every one of those organizations probably arose to meet a need. Some still help to meet a need. But all of them? I have my doubts whether the machinery itself, the innumerable social-service and recreational activities, will by themselves change or deeply help any large number of people. And the pity is that the little churches are just as much like these committeeized juggernauts as they can afford to be.

Some time since I sat in the back of a church while a lady explained a "church-pantry" to some forty women. There was a place where the women of an area brought samples of their preserves and jellies, and stacked them before they were distributed to orphanages and other places where people were not apt to have such things. These ladies got very much excited about it, and fell to work at once. I chanced the same day to lunch with the lady who was doing the talking, and I asked her a very blunt question. I said, "How many of the women on your committee do anything for the street-women in the southern part of the city?" She said, "You know, it's curious. There are a dozen women like that in a hospital in South ———, and only yesterday I called up fourteen of our ladies to see if some of them would not go down and visit them, but they all declined." Orange

marmalade, my friends, is a good deal easier to make than Christians.

I think, too, that the Christian Church has gone off the rails by the espousal of what is called "the social Gospel," as if this were something new and something different from the whole Christian Gospel of the ages. As the expression of a full-orbed Christianity, you and I have got to be concerned with what Christ means in economics, politics, race questions, industry, and international relations. It is an inevitable outcome of any serious avowal of discipleship of Jesus Christ. I believe that all of us who profess and call ourselves Christians must stand somewhere with reference to temperance and the League of Nations and poverty and war. I am ashamed that Protestant Christianity is so much a matter of the further refinement of the upper crust, and has hardly begun to touch the industrial masses. But the question is how this is to be achieved. I hold, because I believe that Jesus held, that no man could express in his social relations a spirit which was not in effect in his personal life. When the Church takes up the social Gospel as merely a set of ethical principles, which might be lifted out of Christianity and applied by anybody anywhere, whether or not they derive their life from Christ, she has simply forsaken the original Gospel. There is a familiar picture in the minds of social-minded people, of comfortable evangelicals, hugging personal salvation to themselves, living off the sweat of underpaid labour, blind to their own guilt for social injustice, and fattening their souls for heaven: and that is a terrible pic-

ture. But there is another quite as bad, and in this day quite as common: it is the picture of the social liberal or radical, the basis for whose desire to reform society and the world is an inner frustration and maladjustment which can only forget its own sick soul by tinkering with the affairs of people at a distance. I have heard that brilliant, red-headed young Scotchman, Jimmie Watt, organizer of the strike in Fyfeshire in 1926, and in those days a flaming Communist, declare that personal frustration lay behind his own social enthusiasms and activities. I believe the real reason why the Church has failed in the social application of Christianity is not that she has been preoccupied exclusively with individual salvation: but rather that she has been like the donkey between two piles of hay, talking first of a social Gospel, and then of a personal, but never getting people one by one spiritually transformed to the point where the question of their social relationships is bound to be raised, and their social conscience awakened, not in general about general sins (mostly other people's), but specifically about their own. As the Oxford Group has gone through a country like South Africa, it has brought a new racial understanding everywhere. British and Dutch, blacks and whites, who have been touched by the movement, regard each other in a new way. One of our finest American negroes is now doing student work in the land of his ancestors: and he told me that he had been surprised to see the social consequences of a movement which begins with personal religion. But I am quite sure that if we had gone into that country with a

banner flying that we were come to reconcile the Boers and the British, the whites and the blacks, we should have met with a very cool reception. When conversion took place first; when the absolute viewpoint of Christ was implanted in individuals, they met in a different spirit. Of course it changed their relations.

I believe that we have also made a great mistake to think that we could set religion forward by mere intellectual defence of it. If this could be done, the theological seminaries would have converted the world long ago. One pays his respects to the scholars and the teachers who make the historic facts and truths of Christianity accessible to us: but this alone never changed anybody. Our modern deference to the intellectual has somehow spread the notion abroad that religion is primarily a set of ideas, and that a person gets at it by the dissection of it with his wits. Nothing could be farther from Jesus' thought, or His way with people. He never argued with anybody. In a personally modest, generally in a conciliatory, sometimes in a frankly dogmatic fashion, He put before people the truth of His Gospel. It always had theological roots and implications, but the truth was usually put in the form of pictures and stories. The Church as a whole needs to learn the truth of Henry Drummond's great words, that we do not need to prove things to people, but only to let them see things. The tragic thing is that a person can be intellectually persuaded of the truth of Christianity without knowing its power in all the recesses of his life. I do not know any people

who more desperately need a full and releasing experience of the power of the living Christ than some of those to whom the ideas of Christianity are both true and familiar. We have succeeded in converting the wits of a good many people to Christ's principles. But one often finds them longing for true spiritual experience and power and inner joy. If a man is going to preach week by week, he must keep his mind brushed up, and he must know the main currents of thought in the life about him. But when I realize the truth of Dr. Grensted's statement, that ". . . the defence of religion by logical argument has proved singularly unconvincing," and when I know how much easier it is to dig at a book than it is to change a man, and when I think how different a sermon this minister might preach on Sunday if he had had only one good talk with a man through the week, that had brought that man face to face with Christ and helped him to take Christ for his Master, I wonder whether a man's study is not quite as likely to be his spiritual graveyard as his workshop. The path from study to pulpit is not the path of fullest progress: it must thread the place of prayer for guidance, and it must brush past the haunts of men. Only so will our truth be shot through with life, so that it compels the outsider and challenges the insider, and makes the abundant life available for everybody.

Perhaps the chief sin of the Christian Church of our time is using people at the expense of developing them. I mean taking people where they are, letting them do for us the thing that they can do and are willing to do,

without reference to whether it means for themselves continuous growth in Christian discipleship. Here is a woman with a gift for teaching religion to children. Do we accept that gift as the last gift of God to her, and let her do this work which she can do: or do we know how to carry her through the stages of complete personal conversion to Christ in all areas of her life, full-team play with other workers, and take thought for her as we expect her to take thought for the children? Our failure to do so means inevitably her failure to carry through with them a programme of life which reaches to their families, their other teachers, and all who have responsibility for them. Here is a man of wealth. He will not come often to church, but he thinks churches are good things in communities, and gladly gives five hundred a year. What does that do to us in relation to him? Does it tie our tongues? Does it muzzle us? Might it not challenge him to say that God wants "not yours, but you," and to refuse his money? I knew a church-member to whom a church owed a whacking debt for a loan on its building. That man was living in sin with a woman not his wife, and he finally killed himself—but the Church said nothing, did nothing—could say and do nothing, because it was unguidedly beholden to a man it was using at the expense of his development. How many well-to-do men sit on church, charity, Young Men's Christian Association and mission boards, dry, sterile, spiritually inert, because the executive secretaries and other board members take them for granted, are willing to accept their judgment and their cash, to use them at the

expense of developing them? I could name you a dozen right off.

It looks as if the truth were that most leaders in Christian work today are institutionalists. They begin committed to the perpetuation of great institutions. They do not begin, as Jesus did, committed only to a spiritual family, whose spiritual training is the first responsibility. Of course we all believe, in general, that as Christians we are more concerned with personality than with institutions. But there is the budget and the round of meetings and work that must be got done. We begin with high hopes, but we wind up the drudges and slaves of institutions. I know that there are lazy and impractical men, who are hiding their own incompetence behind criticism of institutionalism: and I know that a certain amount of organization is needed. But, I know, too, that the institutions which began as means have largely become ends. They are still millstones round our necks. The things which began as bridges across which God could come into human lives have become barricades which nothing can cross. And the inwardness of all this is that whatever we can get our hands on is grist for our institutional mill, no matter what happens to personality during the process. And that is sin before God.

Immediately allied with this is the stress of activity versus experience. The cry today is for service. It comes from such shallow convictions and conceptions of human life that it does not ask the question whether those who are called on to serve are *fit* to serve. Of course, if giving money, or providing hospital care, or

ting people over difficulties is the depth of our service, if we have nothing else to give but human kindness, then this call to human service is the best we can do. When we look a little below the surface we find that these remedies are painfully temporary, and almost never touch aught but the surface of the problem. They do not help adjust a family, they do not help to change a disposition, they do not clear a tangled relationship. They are poultices on cancers, rose-water squirted at leprosy. What does it *mean* to serve any one? Surely nothing less than to aim at his own highest potentiality, the redemption of his personality through the fullest experience that he can have of God. In the process, we may manifest common humanity by such satisfaction of his physical necessities as we can offer: but any one who has thought with any depth about life knows that the *great* service, the service which exceeds all other services, is the impartation of transforming spiritual experience. What use is all this regimentation of kind people in ranks of human service, without so much as finding out whether those who serve have themselves deeply *been* served, whether these who seem in a position to offer relief are really in such a position because their own lives have been deeply and radically healed by the Spirit of God? There is an activity of human service which is the inevitable outcome of the religious view of life. But modern America is all but gone insane with the notion that religion consists solely in this service. Therefore you will find plenty of churches entirely happy in the furious prosecution of a campaign of service, in which

people's souls go dry for the want of God. Religion needs to re-investigate its innumerable efforts in the line of activity and service, and make sure that the inner lives of its people are given to, and pervaded by, the Spirit of God. The whole Gospel is an alternation of action and contemplation, of giving and receiving, of grace and labour. But no honest man today can fail to see that our preponderant lack is in the direction of contemplation, reception from God, grace.

And the fruit of these things is all about us. The effect upon the ministers is one of profound bewilderment and discouragement. These directions in which the churches seem tending call for a combination of qualities few men can hope to possess: namely, those of an orator, an organizer, a social reformer, an economist, a business man, a philosopher, and a Rotarian. You know how tragically many ministers have slunk away into substitute-jobs—publicity, teaching, social work, and even selling—who know that the ministry is God's call to them, but yet do not see how they can take it up again. Some of them have plugged along at it for years, with waning enthusiasm and little fruitage, because of economic necessity, or want of anything better, or from the lingering hope that one day something would turn up to change the whole thing. My mail brings me weekly, almost daily, letters from ministers of every denomination and section of the country, who show uncertainty in their vocation, unhappiness in their work, defeat in their lives, and heart-hunger for realistic fellowship upon a basis of the truth. How one does long to get these fellows face to

face, to talk out their problems at leisure, and down to the bottom, ferreting out the fears and the wrongs and the compromises and the hidden things, sharing with them one's own needs and difficulties, and helping them to make that elemental and decisive spiritual turn which changes everything—home, church, work, inner and outer life—and in the twinkling of an eye gives back the zest for life and for the ministry, which we feared was gone forever! How many times one has seen it, and seen it last, and seen it issue in a ministry with a message, in a life with no more talents than before in handling a man-made institution, but with talents to spare when it comes to touching and changing human lives. And when that is one's ministry, it is strange how things like organizations and finances and routine take care of themselves.

And the effect upon the layman is slow secularization, paganization. It has become perfectly appalling what our ministers are content with in their people! Some time since I was working with an old college friend of mine, who has grown fat and rich, but keeps his place on a church-board. He is kindly, but thoroughly indulgent of himself. Only with difficulty could one find the slightest Christian challenge in his life. One day I was urging him in front of his minister to go far enough to begin to win people for Christ. This layman was both mystified and intrigued at what I was saying. He knew it represented something way beyond his knowledge or experience: but he half wanted it. And what do you think the minister said? "This dear fellow is doing it all the time!" That

minister was entirely contented if the layman backed him up financially, came to meetings, went to church with some regularity.

There are some laymen who are quite content to get away with this sort of shamming. But there are more who are not. They begin to find out, like the boy who cheats, that they are only cheating themselves. This make-believe counterfeit of Christianity is not fooling God, themselves, or their pagan neighbours. Some time since a parson and one of his vestry came in to see me. The parson wanted me to convince the layman that he ought to help him build a new parish house: and the clergyman thought that because we had built a new parish house, we would be very enthusiastic and give him plenty of backing. I held my peace, and let the layman talk. As politely as he could, consistently with honesty, he said that there had not been enough spiritual results in the church to warrant a parish house, and for his part he wished to see more before he entered upon an expensive plan. The parson tried every way to make me persuade that man to back him up. There was no semblance of guidance about it—just a human desire to build a parish house. As for spirituality in outlook, there was no question which held the higher, and I said so. Do you know that I blushed for my cloth that day? I have blushed for it often when I have found laymen satisfied with the false gospel of comfort the preacher is providing; and more often still when I have seen clergymen positively shamed by the desire of their laymen for more religion, when they have been unable or unwilling to provide it.

There is, thank God, a seething restlessness amongst some of our laymen for a much more uncompromising Gospel, and one which asks of them a far deeper enlistment of themselves in active Christian service—by which I mean intelligent evangelism.

We have been somewhat on the negative side in this chapter. In the one that follows I hope to try to show the path along which I believe we may find the way back.

II

THE CONVERSION OF CHRISTIANS

IN our last chapter we dealt with the sins of the Church. Now let us turn our attention to the conversion of Christians. I use the phrase deliberately, and I mean by conversion a maximum experience of Jesus Christ. We find ourselves in various stages of arrival. Some of us were brought up in religious homes, but we have grown used to religion, and the shine has gone out of it. Some of us are filled with enthusiasm for sound theology, but it lacks life. Some of us, and great numbers of nominal members of our churches, are hanging on to any religious conviction whatever by the skin of our teeth: faith has been eaten away, we think, by what Lippmann calls "the acids of modernity," but perhaps actually by the influence of what we used to call "sin" until we were emancipated. Even the sincerest and the godliest of Christians today realize how much further they need to go spiritually if they are to influence their own children and the godless neighbours about them. One of the suggestions which came from the missionary conference a few years ago in Jerusalem was to pray "for the completion of our own conversion." We shall think today about that.

Now I have a conviction that the will of God for

every man, woman and child who calls himself a Christian is that our lives be dedicated to His will in utter surrender and consecration; that the Voice of God in prayer should be an abiding reality, to be depended on for every decision; that we be an integral part of a vital Christian fellowship; and that we be used to bring other people to Christ. That seems to me as much a part of the birthright of every Christian as common honesty. Those experiences were part of the life which is set forth in the New Testament. All Christian people theoretically believe in them; they are part of our fundamental faith and tradition. But for many of us one or all of those four elements in the New Testament have been lost out of our lives. We may or may not believe them abstractly possible: but they are not possessions. And that means that we lack today the authentic note of genuine inspiration. That is why we speak with no authority, and why the world is indifferent to us.

How can we gain back authentic inspiration? How can we know again so clearly the power of God in our own lives that once more the Church may begin to dent the world, instead of being dented by it?

There is only one place to begin, and that is with ourselves. It has been said that "we take hold of God by the handle of our sins." I heard recently of a coloured preacher who said of his people, "It's all right when I preaches about de sunset, and it's all right when I preaches about de moon playin' on de water; but it seems like a kind of a coolness comes over dis congregation when I teches on de Ten Commandments."

Well, coolness or no, we need to "tech on de Ten Commandments," and do it much more personally than we have been doing.

What are the sins that hold us back from fulness of spiritual power?

I talked recently with a clergyman, who began by telling me that he knew he was not giving his people what they ought to have; and he really wanted to know what was the matter. It did not take us long to dispose of the idea that his was a peculiarly difficult situation, that his people seemed unusually lacking in any sense either of need or of spiritual values: almost every parson's people and job are like that when you look at them through similar glasses.

Then we thought we would take off the glasses, and begin to think about the fellow who was looking through them. As we talked, conviction developed that he was up against certain quite clearly defined sins in his own life.

The first one was pride. Pride of his office, of which he had a very high opinion: and this may lead a man to work very hard to come up to his own conception of the ministry; or it may only make him a little pundit in his own bailiwick. It had done the latter for him. It came out in enforcing discipline with his young people, by which he succeeded in making them behave while they were around the church: but he had not brought them to any personal knowledge of Christ, and he had succeeded in making them dislike and fear their minister, rather than trust and confide in him. As we moved forward in conviction, he advanced very good

reasons why he had done these things: but then he would become honest and admit they were pride at bottom. He had come by a terrible feeling of inferiority in his youth, and he leaned towards a conception of the ministry which compensated him and gave him the authority which he enjoyed the more because he had never before had it.

One pauses long enough to comment that there is no profession in the world more likely to exaggerate human pride than the ministry: in every other office people expect to work with others, and the few who deserve it will some day command the business. But every man who joins the army of ministers, expects to be an officer, and merely endures the assistantship so long as he must before he can "get his own church," which may be only another means of saying "get his own way." And we must not be deceived by the fundamentally unselfish aims of the ministry into forgetting that we may be profoundly selfish about pursuing an unselfish course.

The next sin which he felt convicted of was exclusiveness. He happened to be a person who had been emotionally a good deal hurt in his youth; and while he longed for human companionship in a way, he was always pushing people off from occupying any real place in his heart. He lived to himself and for himself. There were times when he was available to his people: and there were times when he frankly enjoyed being mysterious and absent. He would never divulge his plans to any one: they were "his business." And while he was necessarily a public figure in his parish, he drew

a curtain round his real self, even when he sat face to face with one person in need who might have been helped by the sharing of himself. Certain people made him mad on sight, and never got anywhere near him.

The third need lay in the area of his affectional life. Starved for normal human companionship, afraid of being hurt by too close associations, there grew up a few absorbing relations, through which the winds of the Spirit, cool and clear and strong, could not blow. There were people he favoured, people he felt sentimental about. They seldom if ever knew that it went so deep with him: but of course it utterly robbed him of power when he found himself in the presence of another person he was trying to help, and who had the same problem. Under these conditions, a man must be silent, or hypocritical.

The fourth need he defined as "resting his case in a point of view." It is a telling and arresting phrase. It describes one of the great sins of Christians. He was at the time being initiated into the minutiae of a particular ecclesiastical point of view which need not be named: and he at first tried to tell me that his contact with a few ministers of that persuasion was going to be enough to clear all his difficulties. I asked whether they dealt with him on the deep level where he really lived, and he said they did not. Later he told me that he knew there was no true solution in any such direction. Now when any one remembers how many people think that they have an adequate experience of God because they believe the Bible from cover to cover, or because they have learned *not* to believe

the Bible from cover to cover; or because they have clung to an orthodox theory of the Atonement, or because they have rejected it for one more modern; or because they have been brought up in some very select communion and parish, and feel about it as did the Anglican who said he "supposed it was possible to approach Almighty God by other means than through the Anglican liturgy, but no gentleman would avail himself of them;" when one remembers how possible it is for a man to call himself by the magnificent name of Catholic, and then deny the name by being as narrow as a knife-blade; and when one thinks of how many people feel comfortable and safe in the "evangelical position" who have never even thought that the only possible reason for being an evangelical in faith is to be evangelistic in life; when one thinks of the time that is consumed in little clerical societies for the defence of some tenet, or school of thought; and when one thinks of how the world despises all this pettifogging irrelevance when it is burning up with almost universal disaster, one simply has less and less time for people with "a point of view."

Like most of us ministers, one of his sins was that of emotional refuges. Because, for some strange reason, the ministry is for most men a terribly lonely job, through their want of deep fellowship with any one, we develop caves into which we retreat with emotional satisfaction. For him, one of them was going off to stay in another city which he loved, where he was by himself and could ensconce himself in a hotel room and do just exactly what he wanted without asking by-your-

leave of anybody. Reading is often just such an emotional refuge for ministers: for what is the use of so much reading and study unless through it we are actually learning to bring people to Christ? But is it helping us really to bring people to Christ, or is it a comfortable way of occupying ourselves decently in order to excuse ourselves from that much more difficult business? My friend, the Rev. John Watt, of Edinburgh, says the bookstore used to be his saloon. I'll tell you frankly, just in the interests of honesty, that my home, my preaching, my reading and all the enthralling details of my parish and evangelistic work may at any time become emotional refuges for me if I do not allow God to guide my feelings, my leisure, my time, and my intellectual life. Complete spiritual discipline involves being guided at all times and in all things, clear down to the innermost corners of our life.

Finally there was the sin of fear. For him it incarnated itself in fear of the opinion of other men whom he respected in the ministry. He wondered what they would think of this or that move on his part. I know clergy who are the tame servants of their official laymen, through fear of losing the job or the good opinion of those men. Sometimes we fear for health, often we fear about money either for ourselves or for the parish, we fear about the future, sometimes we fear that the sermons won't last out, and we dream a nightmare about fumbling for something to say of a Sunday morning. This absence of a firm hold on God, and the consequent clutching after secondary security, underlies

perhaps as much unhappiness and failure in the ministry as any other thing.

These, of course, are not all the sins of us ministers and laymen. There is not time to touch on them all. These that I have mentioned may have come near your problem, or may have missed it entirely. But whether I have touched your need or not, I think that if you are honest you will agree with me that the problem lies at our own door. The trouble with the Church is not want of equipment, money, programmes or paraphernalia: it is want of personal experience of Jesus Christ and genuine faith on the part of her ministers and people. We must find out how to go the rest of the way with our conversion.

Personally, I am quite clear how this must start. It must start, as my minister friend stated, by the sharing of these sins with another Christian who has found his way a bit farther than we have.

That has a Scriptural basis: "Confess your sins one to another, and pray for one another that ye may be healed."¹ I would remind those of the Catholic inclination that it does not say, "Confess your sins to a priest:" and I would remind those of the Protestant persuasion that it does not say, "Confess your sins to God only." It says very plainly, "Confess your sins one to another." I am convinced that the Catholic practise of confession provides an almost perfect machinery for the needed exteriorization of human sins, and that at its best it can be a great instrument of grace: but I would like to add, also, that this goes

¹ The Epistle of St. James 5:16.

along with a doctrine of the Church which will, in many instances, prevent the priest from sharing his own sins with the penitent, and also from expecting any true spiritual leadership from the person who is "healed."

I am equally convinced that the Protestant notion of "confession to God only" ignores the deep spiritual and psychological fact that we almost always need a human hearer and witness to validate our confession to God and make it *real to us*. Of course confession, in the absolute sense, is to God alone: but where there is a human listener, confession is found to be both more difficult and more efficacious. It is, as a matter of fact and experience, a relatively uncostly thing to fall on our knees and confess our sins to God—it should not be, and perhaps would not be if we were closer to God and more sensitive to His will: but it is a very costly thing to say these things out in the presence even of a human being we can trust; and, as a matter of fact, this is extraordinarily effective in making the first break to get away from sins. Almost every vital movement in spiritual history has made some use of this practise. Some of us prefer the word "sharing" to the word confession: it has not quite such stiff and formal connotations. But whatever you call it, the experience is the same.

Hear John Wesley on this subject, in 1748:

"In compliance with their desire," he says, "I divided them into smaller companies. The chief rules of these bands run thus: 'In order to "confess our faults one to another and pray for one another that we may be healed," we intend:


“(1) To meet once a week at the least.

“(2) To come punctually at the hour appointed.

“(3) To begin with singing or prayer.

“(4) To speak each of us in order, freely and plainly, the true state of our soul, with the faults we have committed in thought, word, or deed: and the temptations we have felt since our last meeting.

“(5) To desire some person among us (thence called a leader) to speak his own state first, and then to ask the rest, in order, as many and as searching questions as may be, concerning their state, sins and temptations.’ Great and many are the advantages which have flowed ever since from this closer union of believers with each other. They prayed for one another that they might be healed of faults they had confessed: and it was so. The chains were broken, the bands burst asunder, and sin had no more dominion over them.”



It is my conviction, and that of the Oxford Group with which I am associated, that detailed sharing should be made with one person only.

Looked at in detachment, and with the prejudice natural to Protestant minds, sharing may seem a terrible ordeal: and there are certainly times when it is anything but easy, as many of us can testify who have been through it. But we have known also the peculiar relief, having in it something closely akin to the grace of God, which comes when “the worst” is known to at least one other human soul, when someone else carries with us in sympathetic understanding the secret which lay like lead in our hearts. Most of us are by nature reserved when it comes to the imparting of our innermost feelings about anything. Francis Thompson said: “I have suffered from reticence all my life:

the opening out of hearts and minds, where there is confidence, puts an end to so much secret trouble that would grow monstrous if it were brooded over." You must yourself have been with someone in trouble when first they begin to ventilate their lapses, fears, prejudices, problems, sins, in an atmosphere of equality, sympathy, leisure and confidence, to know how simple and natural is this first step on the way back to spiritual health.

If the person who seeks to help you is wise, he will have learned how to be a good listener. The trouble with most personal work is that the worker talks too much. He ought to know how to ask a few leading questions; how to see behind what you say to what makes you say it; how to be, as it were, silently provocative. Am I wrong in saying that in nine out of ten conventional interviews the preacher or worker does nine-tenths of the talking? I venture to say that the reason why most of us gave up trying to do this work at all, if we ever tried it, was that we never could get over that embarrassing moment when neither the person who wanted help, nor we, could make that step that broke the ice: and so we skirted all round the problem and never touched it. The obvious way to make it easy for another person to share is to share yourself. There is an amusing story in one of Voltaire's romances, *L'Ingénue*, about a Huron Indian who had gone to France with some travellers: and an abbé was trying to get him to confess his sins. He pointed out the passage we have quoted in St. James, and the Indian duly made his confession. Then he

arose and pulled the abbé out of the confession-box and said, "It says, 'Confess your sins one to another.' I have confessed mine. Now you shall not stir till you have recounted yours." The difference between true sharing and formal confession lies primarily in the open willingness of the person who is trying to help, to share himself. St. Paul tells the Thessalonians, ". . . we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls" (I Thess. 2:8). He may have reason to think that he knows about what your difficulty is, and he may share something parallel in his own life. Or he may share in general what sort of person he was before his conversion, and how Christ came to him and changed him. In any case, he will create the sort of atmosphere in which you can talk without fear, reserve, or hurry. I believe that, with at least one person, everything should at some time come out, clear back to the place where our memory begins. For, while the old wrong itself may have ceased to do any harm, as a needle may become embedded somewhere in the body and be harmless, the pride which will not share the wrong is still a present fact; and the only way to break the pride is to share the wrong.

Of course, the mere externalizing of these difficulties does not banish them, though it is apt to banish emotional tension about them. They must next be gathered up in a new decision of the will and handed over to God in a new surrender. How many talks have come to little more than a few moments of emotional relief because the worker did not bring the person he

was helping to this step of decision! A minister or a church-worker may need to be helped to it quite as much as a complete outsider. Insofar as there has been sin unconfessed, by so much was the whole personality unsundered to God: and therefore the need is clear for full surrender to be made. It is my own conviction, based on talking with a good many of them, that there are many Christians who need, and often long, to have someone deal with them in just this elementary way which does not take them for granted; but knows how first to win their confidence and let them talk themselves out, and then asks them to make the great decision once and for all. There are a good many people who know that they need to be converted: but they have such an august conception of conversion that they have not learned that they may have a part in their own conversion. It is true that only the Spirit of God converts any man: it is His direct action on the soul that alone converts. But we may draw near and put ourselves in position to be converted by the simple act of self-surrender. That was a great discovery to me, and it has been also to a great many people with whom I have talked.

I think that the next stages of development are also quite clear. Before all else, there must come a new tone in our contact with God. One of the appalling results of even "minor" sin (if you can make such a distinction at all) is the way it utterly cuts prayer. We can go on believing that God is, though faith is sapped by sin: but we simply cannot pray. The act of surrender should mean the assumption upon our-

selves of God's will for us, and should open our minds completely to His will. This means that the resumption of prayer is possible, especially of the prayer which seeks to find, rather than to change, His will. This means that listening-prayer is much more important than asking-prayer. We shall have more of this to say later in another address.

It will be helpful for us to go on record as to this new reach in our spiritual life, both privately and publicly. If there be a meeting where personal testimony is possible, let us go and give it. Think what it would mean if everyone who spoke in prayer-meeting had a *new* experience to recount! This all helps to fix definitely in our minds our own decision, and it helps those who hear about it. Perhaps more effective still will be our sharing of it with individuals whom it can help; and we shall probably be surprised to find how much it helps them to know that we have had to make further steps in our lives—we who always seemed to be as pillars of the Church and monuments of righteousness!

But I am certain that the most important factor in continuance, second only to prayer, is in a series of new relationships.

First with the family. Here, for instance, is a clergyman who has seen the failure of his ministry, and faced his sins, and made a new start with God. The family ought to be the first people to see a change in him. He may need to make a blanket-apology to the entire family for impatience, for temper, for wanting his own way, for wanting to play Providence to

them all. There may be specific wrongs to be shared with individuals. Probably heretofore he has been confessing *their* sins to them: now he confesses his own. And it may be that there is a son whom he has never been able to interest in religion, who is now for the first time intrigued by the fact that his father admits his wrongs. There may be a disgruntled wife, who has always drudged over the church-work because she was the minister's wife and more or less had to; who now begins to see something in her husband she never saw before. Or she may be one of those officious ladies who runs everything because she is the minister's wife. Advice has been of no use, neither commands nor coaxing has gotten anywhere. But sharing is different. And as he confesses his faults, she may be willing also to confess hers. And there will come to them such a relationship of oneness in Christ as has only been approximated at other times. I believe that the best steady confessor any man can have is his wife, if she is a converted Christian woman who is willing to live out fellowship with him. I have no hesitation in saying that the primary human source of continued power in his life and ministry lies in the honesty, love, sharing and complete openness of their relation. No man defeated in his own home ever does anything in the ministry but make a lying success. "If a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God?"² It may take time and patience to win to Christ a wife whom one has pampered, or made use of, or obeyed, or cowed, for years

² I Timothy 3:5.

past: but until and unless that relation is clear and open and God-guided, there can be no true power anywhere else. And the same is only slightly less true with the children. Once let a father share honestly and undefensively with his children the faults that have affected their happiness, and they will begin to come his way. The old saw is true, "A confessing Christian is a propagating Christian." Confession, like charity, begins at home. I suspect that in many cases, confession is the only charity the folks at home really want!

And then the church staff: the assistant clergy, the deaconess, lay-workers, secretaries. How many ministers live on a basis of candour and complete understanding with their workers, clerical or lay? If the minister thinks the deaconess is stubborn or goes her own way too much, he is apt to say it, not to her, but to someone else. If the curate thinks the rector is high-handed, gives him nothing but dirty work, and unattractive people to call on, he is apt to tell the female parishioner who has "adopted" him, and not tell the rector. Many a church-staff plays a game of hide-and-seek, when it ought to be playing a game of truth. Now if the minister is changed, all this will be changed also. The truth will be spoken in love all around. And as he shares with these people, they will share with him. He will help them to the same decision he has made. I think of one minister who travelled twelve hundred miles to find what I am talking to you about: he stayed till he found it. Then he went home; and in two days he telegraphed that his secre-

tary had been won to full surrender, and that she had won his wife. Of course, such relationships as these will deflate a terrible amount of ministerial pride, and soon expose disloyalty amongst the workers: only the spiritually genuine and courageous will contract to live on this kind of a basis. The others will eliminate themselves: or if they stay on, but permanently resist conversion, you'd better let them go.

Need I say that to live in this fashion with one's family, and one's immediate church-family, will begin to affect all the work and all the relationships of his life? People who never seemed to be anything but problems before suddenly become opportunities and yoke-fellows. His preaching will be changed, for he will be in new touch with God and in new touch with people. Not only in what he says, but in all that he does, people will begin to see a new man. Said a middle-aged clergyman who had been humanly successful but never brought one person to a decisive experience of Christ in thirty years, and then was changed, "My people got a new minister without getting rid of the old one." And when you think of the engineered separations, the dishonest relations between people and ministers, and realize that a minister who is wrong himself will be wrong anywhere; and an impossible congregation will go on being impossible until they are converted, how you do long to have that experience repeated: "a new minister without getting rid of the old one."

And to ministers like this the ordinary layman can go and open his heart. He knows that his doubts and

sins will be heard without shock, rebuke, hurt or sentimentality; that the minister will simply be a needy human being beside him who will share his whole life honestly wherever it will help. A church soon finds out, a neighbourhood soon finds out, when a parson has been changed, that he is "preaching different kind of sermons," or that some notable unbeliever or drunkard has been to him and been converted, or some couple on the verge of divorce have been, as one couple expressed it, "not only re-born, but re-married," and that people can now go to him and find leisure and help, instead of busy-ness and the patter of advice. Nothing flies so fast as this kind of spiritual good news. There is alas! too little of it not to be marked when it appears.

I believe that if the Church is to be re-made, and to take hold again in our day, the primary necessity is the conversion of the ministers to a full experience of the Lord Jesus Christ. But converted ministers cannot do it all; the same flame which has swept them must sweep on from them to their people. I have seen some churches where this wonderful and gloriously beautiful thing is taking place—where a changed minister is gradually undoing the mischief of an unconverted ministry, apologizing here, restoring there, winning broken confidence somewhere else, living in the open with his people and frankly asking their help in the breaking of the clutches of old habits. You feel the stir of the Holy Spirit in churches like that. The sinners begin to find they are welcome. Miracles begin to happen again. The flavour of the New Testament is recaptured. Prodigals and Pharisees sit down with

one another in sharing fellowship and laugh to think how blind and stupid they used to be.

If the Church is to take hold again, the religion of Jesus must first take hold of His nominal followers. Judgment must begin at the house of God.

III

LIVING IN TOUCH WITH GOD

THE Christian life consists in a current of spiritual electricity which runs through three angles of a triangle: God, myself, and other people. A block anywhere in the circuit will put a stop to the current. We are, for the moment, considering the current as it runs betwixt God and myself. There are a great many people who, thinking that religion is a straight line between two points, themselves and God, wonder why they are not in touch with Him, or cannot keep in touch with Him. But if they will reflect that all true religion is triangular, they will remember that the difficulty may be found in a short circuit between the two angles at the base, themselves and other people. Therefore, before we go any farther, I want to remind you that our experience of God is all bound up inextricably with our human relationships. "If a man love not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, first go and be reconciled unto thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." It is idle for us to try to be in touch with God, or keep in touch with Him, so long as there are

human relationships which must be righted at the same time.

Unless you differ largely from myself, when you hear a phrase like "living in touch with God," you immediately tend to think of the effortful struggle of the human soul upward to God. I can remember my labours at concentration in prayer, at keeping God always in my mind. They never were very successful. I had an idea that God was an object to which I must give constant attention: and unless that attention were steady, I felt that I was failing.

Then there came into my experience a deeper conception of God. He was "more ready to hear than we to pray." "We love him because he first loved us." God was taking the initiative in communion. He had sent Jesus into the world to make that known to us. What was wanted on our part really was receptivity, rather than effort. When I surrendered my life to His will, prayer began to be a new thing: not a way to change His will, but a way to find it. It did away with much of the difficulty of the human persuasion of God, and became largely God's persuasion of us. It was His will which was paramount and mattered, not ours. This certainly carried with it the implication that listening was more important in prayer than asking. It meant that what we should find in prayer was, not so much the answer to requests (though this is a permanent element in all true prayer), and not only the doctrine that what we find in prayer is God Himself (though to be in living touch with Him is a tremendous experience), but that we should carry away from

prayer an intelligible idea of just what God wants us to do. There seem to me to be few serious intellectual difficulties in this idea of prayer, once you accept in full the doctrine of a personal God, who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and who revealed the light of the knowledge of His glory in Christ's face. I may say that here was the first place where I ever laid hold of prayer as a daily working force in my own life.

Christian teaching has been awfully vague about guidance. We are quite clear in our theology of the Holy Spirit. But we have forgotten that the ordinary man lays hold of God through experience, and not through definition. So far as the average church-member goes, he is like the Ephesians and virtually "has not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." For the Holy Spirit sounds very vague until we know that He brings with Him definite light. So few preachers are willing to be definite here. Some time ago I picked up two old sermons of Frederick Farrar, on "The Silence and the Voices of God." He said just what nearly every preacher says when they preach on this subject: that God speaks in six great ways: in nature and creation; in the moral law; in the Scriptures; in Jesus Christ; in human conscience; and in history. All these things are, of course, forever imperishably true. And all of us know them to be true, and have known it for years; yet many of us believe no more now in the practical Voice of God than when we first heard them. We cannot carry on a conversation with God through nature, or the moral law. We find God's general will in the Scriptures. We find God

still more directly in Jesus Christ. But human conscience is no perfect reflector of God, and history only points to His existence and His general will. We want something much more direct. We want to know that God can and does speak directly to the human heart. The reason why some of us believe in guidance, at least in theory, is that the Old and New Testaments are full of instances of it, as specific as you please. Men said clearly that they were guided of God in this and that act and decision. You may try to psychologize all this away if you want; but I prefer to see whether this sort of thing is not now possible to those who put their trust in God entirely.

There are, of course, conditions of guidance. We must have first a surrendered will, as we have said, which wants God's will more than its own, and is ready to do what one is told, no matter whether it be to one's taste or not. We must be relaxed from all tension, of haste or unbelief or too impatient seeking. We need to be freed from self-consciousness, which rationalizes about the processes of guidance while trying to get guidance. This is like digging up flowers by the roots to see how they grow. The positive attitude here seems to me to be, instead of thinking about whether we or humanity in general are capable of receiving guidance, to remember the omnipotence of God, and His power to send us light if He wills to. We need every aid to forgetting ourselves, such as a physical posture to insure the greatest freedom and restfulness: many find that lying down is the most advantageous position; sometimes kneeling; sometimes sitting. We want faith,

a leaning out towards God, trusting that He who rolls the spheres can guide a human mind. We need a regular time for waiting on God, as we shall see later; but guidance may come at any time, and the set times are only more protracted periods in which our minds are sensitized to the Holy Spirit. Guidance comes rather to active than to passive people: it comes when the guidedly active person stops for a fresh lesson from God; the more obedience, the more guidance—not as a quantitative *quid pro quo*, but as a spiritual law.

How, then, do we know what is guidance? You have hardly a right to ask me that question unless you have tried to seek it: but I shall attempt its answer for those who have. Guidance always comes with an authority all its own. This varies in intensity; for guidance is sometimes the motion of a consecrated human mind, mobilized to do the will of God; and sometimes it is the clear shooting-in of God's thought above our thought, transcending human thought supernaturally. I cannot wholly describe to you the experience if you have not had it, but I caution you not to make too much of a mystery or a fetich of it. Consider that an Infinite God is trying to compress His thought into terms that we can understand. You do a similar thing when you try to explain something to your child whose vocabulary consists only of a few nouns. You are not discouraged if he does not get it all at once: but you are available whenever he will make a further try. Most objections to guidance are based on complete inexperience.

The question almost always arises as to the relation

between guidance and conscience—is not guidance simply conscience at work? The best answer I have heard that was ever given to this was by a child of nine who had had an experience of Christ and believed in guidance. One day she told her mother that she had had guidance about something. Her mother said, “You mean your conscience told you this.” She stopped a minute, and said, “No, Mummy. Conscience tells you the difference between right and wrong; but guidance tells you which of several right things you ought to do.”

Then it must be tested by the spirit of Christ. A man steeped in the New Testament will, by so much, get better guidance than a man who is not. Guidance, if true, will never be found contrary to the New Testament. But I have always believed that Jesus did not intend even His own words to constitute another law, final and complete forever: indeed He said, “I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.” Then He promised His Holy Spirit to “guide us into all the truth.” Knowing the life of Jesus, His teachings, His principles and parables, His spirit that was manifested all through His words and acts, constitutes part of the discipline and preparation which are necessary if the Holy Spirit is to find us ready to hear and understand His will: but in themselves they are not sufficient direct inspiration for our practical decisions. We meet many cases not covered by the New Testament. Religion, when it is fresh and vital, is never afraid either of the cost, or of the possible risk, of direct inspiration; but when it cools, it wants rules

and systems, wants to avoid the personal searching which is needed to find direct inspiration, wants to avoid the clash with the conventional world and the conventional church, and the hazard to one's own personal security which is incidental upon living in the Spirit. Jesus did not let men rest content with memories. He made them look forward to a time when His human voice would be withdrawn, and the command of His lips could be no longer heard; when His Church was to be dependent upon the Holy Spirit, who should call to our minds the things He said, take of the things of Christ and show them to the world in fresh ways which the world could understand. The Holy Spirit's guidance will never be contrary to the New Testament: it will really show us what the New Testament means for us in any given case.

God's will is sometimes made clear, also, by circumstances. He guides by open and closed doors. There is always a danger here of being overwhelmed by unreal obstacles, which need to be ignored and crashed through: but there are unmistakable signs sometimes in circumstances.

But chiefly guidance is to be tested by the concurrence of other guided people. We come back again to where we began, with the triangle of relationships. Individualistic guidance can, and sometimes does, run off the rails into undesirable courses. And, on the other hand, if we check guidance with those who really do not believe in guidance, they may simply quench the Spirit by their own wilfulness or want of faith. I heard recently of an instance where a distinguished

clergyman was preaching a series of sermons as a guest-preacher, and had clear guidance to leave the last one unprepared and trust God for his message at the last minute. (Let me pause to say that, while this might be sound guidance for an active and industrious mind, it might not be guidance for a lazy or slipshod one.) The man with whom he was working told him that the congregation that day would exceed all the others, and they expected something fine; and so he cautioned against such carelessness. People like that simply do not trust God, and rule themselves out as relevant helpers in such cases. The preacher obeyed his guidance, and is convinced that God gave him a greater message than he could have prepared. This will serve to show that not all honest people, not even all honest Christians, are to be included amongst those with whom we "check" our guidance. You may strike a bull-headed intellectual, or a fearful-hearted institutionalist, for whom all this is the merest moonshine: pass him by, and find a man that believes in God's guidance. Better yet, find a group that is God-guided, and check it with them. You may have gradually to raise up your own group: for those who believe in guidance at all are few, and some of them are cranks whose message and methods have not had the test of trial and service which is involved in bringing people actually to Christ. But there is no question that the safety of guidance is best guarded by having it checked with the guidance of other guided people who know one another, and have shared together all the facts pertinent to the situation.

This brings in the relation between reason and guidance. Guidance is no short-cut to knowledge. God never yet gave a student an answer to a problem on which he had not done sufficient studying; but I can well believe that God has helped many a student to think without strain or conflict, and so to make use of all the knowledge that he had. Where the mind can find facts, let us find them, and pool them in the pot—all the facts we can find, from anywhere, that bear on the subject. Every bit of human knowledge one can have about people or things will help them, provided that knowledge be surrendered to God and He be allowed to guide in its application. There is no room for prejudiced thought: and much so-called thought is thought with a bias, defending a point of view, rationalizing a desire. But real, honest, dispassionate thinking should precede guidance. It must come in and do all that it can. Then it must retire, and leave the final disposition to God. For the reason is seldom adequate to make those synthetic judgments which are the most important judgments in life. We all know that intuition is better far than reason in such cases: and some of us know that guidance far exceeds intuition. Reason, then, goes as far as it can. God is greater than reason, and makes the final decision and reveals it to us through guidance.

Some of you will find yourselves hung up on the problem of guidance in small things. We all grant that God must guide in the great matters—life-work, marriage, a change in business, a crucial decision. But can you tell me where the little ends, and the large begins?

I suppose, quantitatively considered, our greatest concerns are infinitesimal in this gigantic universe: but as a matter of fact, God judges qualitatively, with reference to their place in His great plan. And here I do not see how one is to say that this is big and that is small. One night years ago in Princeton there came clear guidance to me to call a certain undergraduate at his club and ask him to come and see me. Considered then, I should not have known whether this was little or great. I followed it. The boy was won for Christ, and the first person he won for Christ was a girl—who is now my wife. Was it little, or was it large? Immensely large, so far as I was concerned! So it is all along the line. We are dealing with the infinitely precious stuff of human character; and I have had little guidance in my life that did not, sooner or later, link up with a human being somewhere. I remember a woman telling me some time ago that she had guidance to return a certain dress she had bought: she did not do it, for she could see no human reason why she should—she could “afford” it, and why take it back? I said, “Did it ever occur to you that God wanted to use the return of a dress to put you in touch with the saleswoman, and give you a chance to tell her you were doing it on guidance, and ultimately to win her for a full experience of Jesus Christ?” Nothing is trivial, so far as I can see, for there is nothing which may not have implications as to the winning of someone for Christ.

A man was guided one day to stop at a gas station, when he needed neither gas, oil nor water. A stranger

came up and asked him for a lift. He took him in, and discovered the man was hitch-hiking to Florida in a last desperate attempt to patch things up with a run-away wife who had left him when he lost his money. He had decided to commit suicide if this attempt failed, and was down and out in every way. The result of the talk was his decision for Christ instead. Think how easy it would have been for the driver of the car to have disobeyed guidance because it seemed to him to be trivial.

Let me say this also: there is a certain pride in thinking that *we* can tell whether a thing is large or small beforehand. Personally, I am now content to obey my guidance, and let God decide what is big and what is little. Whatever He tells me is "big" to me.

May I put this all in another way? I have sometimes said that there are three levels of life on which men live: the level of instinct, the level of conscience, and the level of grace. The personal pronouns and verbs which go with these are, "I want," "I ought" and "I am guided." The lower level represents the place where we get what we desire, live as we choose, take what we like. The next level represents the place where we scruple, where we follow duty, where we behave ourselves and obey the law. The third level represents the place where we have gotten above conscience and instinct alike, where desire and duty coincide, where the will of God has become our meat and drink, where we are at the beck and call of the Holy Spirit and where "His service is perfect freedom." I need not remind you that there are a great many

Christians who think, not in three levels, but in two: good and evil; and they fit everybody into them. It is easy to know what to do with the fellows who live for the present and the body and this world: they live by instinct. But can we lump the conscientious and the guided all in one? I think not. Saul was as conscientious as he could be, but he was also as wrong as he could be. So were the Pharisees. So are all the legalists from that time onward. So far as I can see, Jesus was just as anxious to get us up from the level of conscience to the level of grace, as He was to get us from the level of instinct to the level of grace.

Where do most of the church-people that you know live—on which story of this three-storied category? Where is our living? Where is our giving? Most of us, though not all, are above the plane of common instinct. But are we above the plane of common scrupulosity? Where does your minister live? Does he call on guidance, write letters on guidance, preach sermons on guidance, deal with his session or vestry on guidance, make his personal plans on guidance?—or is he driven to make calls because it is expected of him, does he write because the letters lie on his desk and urge him to answer them, does he preach because it is part of the stint he is paid to produce, does he deal fearfully, high-handedly, obsequiously, unreally, with his laymen's board; does he even have areas where he frankly thinks himself deserving of a little personal indulgence, so that he slips down *two* stories, and has his drink, or his theatre-jag, or his risqué story, or his delicious morning grouch every so often?

And where do you lay-people live? Is comfort such a god to you that you are obliged to have just so much of it before you even begin to serve God? Or is money like that? Is food in that class, or travel, or the luxury of an occasional temper? Or have you moved up a class: and has your fidelity to religion made you righteous but rigid, made your religion obnoxious to others, made you censorious of people that sin when you do not know how to win them out of it for Christ, made you uncomfortable with them and them with you, made your religion negative, prohibitive, uninteresting, lacklustre, so that when the children get out from under your wing they say, "No more of that for me"? I am thankful for people who are systematic about their work in the church, on whose presence and faithfulness one can always count. But I always want to tell them that there is yet a third level where they all might live. It includes all that is best in the level of conscience, and it includes one thing which is good in the level of instinct, namely the element of liberty. But it takes the tyranny of the body out of the one, and the tyranny of the conscience out of the other: and lets God's Holy Spirit be the deciding factor in every choice. I am convinced that Jesus lived and died that you and I might live on the upper level of God's grace and guidance. I feel sure that He wanted His whole Church to live there. It is the only thing which will bring back again "the lost radiance of the Christian religion." For that lost radiance is only the glow of authentic inspiration, the outer shining of the inner light.

How, then, shall we seek this inspiration from the

Holy Spirit, till His slightest motion is our ready desire? I can only speak from my own experience. Something happened to the quality of my time of prayer when I moved up out of the old conception of a "Morning Watch" (which had a way of slipping round till evening), to the conception of a "Quiet Time." The emphasis was in a different place. Formerly I had sought to find my way up to God. Now I let Him find His way down to me. Listening became the dominant note. Not the exclusive note: for there was Bible study first, taking a book and studying it straight through; and there was also ordinary prayer, confession, petition, thanksgiving, intercession. But the bulk of the time is listening. Most of us find it indispensable to have a loose-leaf note-book, in which to write down the things which come to us. We find that in trying to remember what has come before, we block what is coming now: we find it impossible to remember sometimes the things which come even in a brief Quiet Time. The Chinese have a saying that "the strongest memory is weaker than the weakest ink." We do not want to forget the slightest thing that God tells us to do: and I have sometimes had a rush of detailed guidance which came almost as fast as I could write it.

It goes without saying that such a period is best in the early morning, while the body and mind are fresh and rested, the perceptions clear and unclouded, and the day is before us. We shall want to stop more than once in the day for further direction, especially with others about problems which concern them and us.

But nothing makes up for our own private time alone with the living God. There He may give us the conviction of sin that clears us of a stoppage and sends us to someone with restoration and apology. He may send us a verse of encouragement, like "Fear not," "Go in thy might, have not I sent thee?", "All is well." He may warn us against a wrong course, or a tedious and time-killing person, or a tendency in ourselves. He may send us to the telephone to call someone, or tell us to write a letter, or pay a visit, or take some exercise, or read a book. Nothing which concerns our lives is alien to His interest, or to the doing of His will. He may give us guidance about how to help someone, or tell us what is the matter with them or us. For growing hundreds of people, this has become a simple, effectual way by which the daily will of God as to the common decisions of our lives may be both sought and found. And the final test of it all remains the unity, the joy, the spiritual power of the lives of people who maintain this practise.

Some may say that they can see how this would increase the devotional life: but what has it to do with helping the Church to take the world for Christ?

Now if I am sure of one thing, I am sure of this: it is the absence of the note of personal inspiration, of the availability of the resources of Almighty God, for the humblest person about the smallest question—it is the reduction of Christianity, instead, to a sterile and self-generated goodness, which has brought the average man today to believe that the religion of Jesus Christ means trying to live up to the moral ideals of Jesus by

human will-power, sometimes fortified by prayer. That is not only characteristic of the view of religion outside the Church, but inside as well. Religion today is largely the imitation of an example, when it ought to be the hearing of a Voice. And so the interior life of Christians has become a dynamo, busy with plans and philanthropies and activity; when it ought to be a receiving-set, primarily concerned with catching the messages from on high. The preaching of the churches has become largely a dry appeal to the human conscience, a call to be good, instead of a watering of the soil of the inner life in the certainty that when men are in touch with the living God they will of course be good: one is weary of the finger of conscience being taken as the symbol of religion. The leadership of the Church has become a marshalling of the already over-taxed energies of men and women, into very worthy social service; instead of being concerned to replenish their waning supply of interior energy, quietness and light. We have backed down from our original position that men must be born anew into the world of the Spirit, and live out their lives from a centre of divine inspiration: we now take the people we find as we find them, line them up in service, send them out to help their fellows with cheer, friendliness or money, because they are too inwardly poor to help others with joy, fellowship and the gift of a spiritual experience. These things are well enough for those who act from humanitarian motives: but they are red herrings across the trail of the Christian Church when they are made the substitutes for, instead of part of the fruits of, Chris-

tian experience. The ordinary man has only time for the main business of religion: he wants to know whether you can put him in touch with the living God. For a time he may call all this activity "practical," but in the long run he will see that it is impractical and steals the time and energies of Christian ministers and workers from the main matter, and long to have us come back to first things. When religion has run the gamut of substitutes and chimeras, when the layman has been put off by everything from theology to amusements, he comes around to the one thing in religion that matters most: a real hold on God, and a real knowledge of His will by genuine revelation. I have seen not a few hard, selfish, worldly men whose first interest in true religion was aroused through the suggestion that it is possible to be in touch with the living God through guidance. We have tried pretty nearly everything else. Maybe we shall succeed by offering to this generation a working supernaturalism, free of theoretical controversy, filled with practical clarity and direction and energy.

The crux of Christianity today lies most certainly in the supernatural. Whether Christianity be a true revelation of God's Self to us in His Son and in His Holy Spirit; or whether it be another human effort to explain the riddle of existence, and to be as decent as we can in a fundamentally mysterious and perhaps meaningless universe, taking Jesus as the one small candle in an infinite darkness—that is the real issue. One regrets unspeakably that this profound question has been so acrimoniously dealt with, and upon such

purely intellectual grounds, by differing schools of thought. Perhaps in an age when science has made experimentation cogent and congenial to us, we shall better demonstrate the supernatural than prove it. I could introduce you to many scores of rather typical modern people who, a few years ago, would have told you they had no faith whatever in the supernatural, but who today live by the light which they believe comes to them direct from God. Some of these people have been through the whole mill of psychology, with its tendency to make one distrust personal experience and almost to analyze it out of countenance: but still they believe that in the phenomena of the guided life they are dealing with something which definitely comes from God to us, something which has no parallel whatever in any of the self-influencing forces of the human mind. Where these people go, a kind of spiritual glamour goes with them which has nothing to do with their human personalities. Where they gather, you will find the happiest and most vital human society that I know. And you will find them continually exercising such influence upon other people as would convince the most sceptical that there courses through them a Power not themselves.

If these God-guided personalities, these common men and women in touch with the living God, could be multiplied upon a wide scale; if the churches could be filled with them, and the world could find it out, we should soon have the world turning back again to the Church, because of the simple fascination of the God-guided life. For, while the generation in which we live

has been bred to intellectual objections about religion, that generation has already begun seriously to question the gains of the past few decades, with war, selfishness, famine, depression and an epidemic of suicide, as the concomitants of unbelief, godlessness, paganism, self-will and sin. We are beginning to see the connection. We are beginning to wonder whether faith may not be the one indispensable factor in a world which shall be decent enough to live in. We have seen how certain modern trends in religion have petered out, and how religion has been betrayed by some of its own backers. I have a conviction that the next development in religion will lie in a revival of personal religious experience, with the emphasis upon conversion, upon God's guidance, and upon the infection of the social order through personalities who are in touch with God. Humanitarianism in religion has failed us.

God give us back the inspiration of His Holy Spirit!

IV

LIVING IN TOUCH WITH PEOPLE

WE have said before that real religion is always triangular—it cannot forget three centres of gravity, God, ourselves and other people. We spoke last time about keeping open the line between God and ourselves. Today we shall think about living in touch with people.

I don't know about you, but I can distinctly remember all through a youth that was closely in touch with the Church, a longing that people might be touched more directly. I was not exactly critical of the Church as I knew it, though as I look back on it I must confess that I think somebody during those years, when I was constantly in Church and constantly going to religious conferences, ought to have known how to win my confidence and meet my needs. I had to wait till I was twenty-four, was a missionary on foreign soil, had been for ten years a communicant, and for seven a lay-reader, of the Episcopal Church, to have the experience which both released me and gave me a message for the other person. While our perceptions are young, and we are not inured to the system of compromise which rules the lives of most of us, we see the Gospel clearly: and one of the things that I saw almost from the first was the amazing power that Jesus had with individuals,

and the tremendous importance He attached to it. Then I looked at the Church, and I found its ministers kindly disposed towards people, ready to do what they could, especially for the sick and sorrowing; but I missed the touch with sinners. These people in the churches did not seem to me nearly as excited about Christ as people were in the New Testament.

Then one day the thing I had been wishing for flashed in front of my eyes. I met a man who knew how to deal with people—individuals. His name is Frank Buchman. I had known ministers and evangelists before: some of them even went far enough to give me some rules about reaching people. But on the Texas border in 1916, in the war-camps of England in 1917, I had missed the needs of two men who opened the door for a spiritual opportunity as wide as a man could, because I did not know what to do for them. The rules alone didn't work. The evangelists had forgotten to tell me that before I could give it away, I must have the experience of Christ myself. They thought, and I certainly did not care to disabuse their minds, that a boy with my background of course had an experience of Christ. What—a lad who decided for the ministry so long ago he has forgotten it, who went to church every Sunday without fail, who helped organize a missionary society at school and was president of the Christian Association in college, and was now a teacher in a mission school—and no decisive experience of Christ? Yes, that was the fact. The bishops and missionaries and parsons who visited at the house, and whom I met in increasing numbers at conferences—

some of them as great Christians as our generation has known—all took me for granted. They helped me immeasurably, some of them, but they did not change me. They began too far down the trail.

The two things that I saw in Frank Buchman were an immense joy in living, and the sense of almost infinite leisure. The first drew me. The second gave me time. He would drop anything for a person. His bags would lie unpacked, his letters unanswered, for as long a time as I wanted to be with him. He put in hours on me—but he got me. He was individual-conscious. He wasn't thing-conscious. I want you to think about that. The average Christian is organization-conscious, meeting-conscious, service-conscious, sermon-conscious, problem-conscious. We ought to be person-conscious. For, in the end of the day, God and people are all that matter. Things, meetings, organizations, churches even, are only important as they help people and glorify God. From that time on I began thinking of individuals. I had had a dreadful Bible class—a dwindling one, where the poor Chinese came for a week or two, and dropped off like blackberries. Then, as a result of my own change, I began taking them one by one—for lunch, for tea, for a walk, for a day's outing. They would come to my rooms. I remember I was reading William James' *Varieties of Religious Experience* at this time, and it fascinated me to read his descriptions of the things I was beginning to see in the lives of my boys. My life began to be built round them—not round my "job" and my classes, but round individual boys who came to my study and talked. It

utterly changed my life and my ministry; and if I can, I want to work out with you some of the principles which underlie this "intense preoccupation with individuals." For it came to me from without as a blessing in time of complete spiritual uselessness; and I am convinced can come to us all and make our work more effectual.

First I think that we must face frankly the failure of other means to do the intimate work of remaking human personality.

The "good influence" theory fails. We have all heard Emerson's remark that what we are speaks so loud men cannot hear what we say. The truth of it obviously lies here: that if what we are does not match what we say, it will be discounted. But to say that Christians can win people to Christ by example only is like saying that doctors can make people well by the evidence of their own health. We have got to learn the *secret* of health, we have got to know the hindrances, and the cure. So it is with religion. I have no question that an unselfish, happy, useful life is one of the greatest drawing-cards that Christianity has. But I have watched the depth of human influence without articulate, directed witness and personal dealing; and it is almost invariably shallow and temporary. It makes people say, "Isn't he wonderful? Isn't she splendid?" It does not often make people say, "That is the thing I must have, and I am going after it till I get it." Nine times in ten these "good influence" people don't know what to say when you ask them their secret—they haven't got any secret. Vaguely they know that God helps them, but that is of no assistance to someone

in desperate need of God. A woman I know went to a very spiritual older friend of hers, asking for help in a crisis of her life, and was absolutely failed. A girl I know went to one of the most distinguished ministers in America, in a time of spiritual need, and came away with the impression that he was a fine man with no conception of her need or how to meet it. The truth is that these "good influence" people think themselves a great deal more convincing than they are. They think they can stop a runaway world by standing still. Sin is vocal, unbelief is articulate—they both advertise. But these people expect to do for Christ what the apostles never expected to do—win the world by keeping quiet.

The education theory fails. So far as secular education goes, great claims have been made for it by its sponsors, but we may as well face the fact that it has shed appallingly little light on the problems which beset our world. One comes to believe that, while education is making strides every day in the training of minds in special subjects, it has betrayed a notable lack in the power to train whole personalities to live. It has not succeeded in giving any coherent synthesis of knowledge, which supplies an adequate view of life. Therefore the lives of our educated people are as hit-or-miss as the rabble who live by sheer instinct—more refined, but no more directed. Education cannot touch the root of the problem. It is possible to know good, and do evil.

And this same criticism is at least largely true of religious education as well. No intelligent man will belittle the influence of church and church-school in

his younger years, or question the value of constant exposure of children to religious influence. But a problem arises where the children are taught principally about the trees and the butterflies, or organized play, and where it is hoped that somehow these little people will surmise that it is religious faith which motivates this kindness to them; we all know they seldom surmise any such thing. And even when religion is "taught," the result is often more than doubtful. What earthly relation have the kings of Israel and the missionary journeys of St. Paul to a boy in high school, battling against the fears, hungers, mystifications of adolescence? The unspeakable dullness of the average church-school is enough to drive off all but the most patient of children. There is nothing for the children to *do*. And in order to rectify this, the schools begin to let them "do" any number of things that have nothing whatever in them of religious experience. These things do not *hold* when there come onslaughts of worldly experience and intellectual controversy. How different it is when the church-school is based not only on teaching but on religious experience, when the classes begin with a Quiet Time, the children share their real problems and needs, get God's direction, work out their lives on the basis of an experience of God! ¹ However good may be the training of children in religion—however happy, pedagogically correct, spiritually earnest—there comes a time when they must make up their own minds whether they will or will not take the Chris-

¹ See a book soon to be published, *Inspired Children*, by Olive M. Jones.

tian way of life. The Roman Catholic Church knows the need and value of nurture if any does: but hear Baron Von Hügel on this point:

"After all, every soul, boy or girl, as they grow up, have to pass through that delicate, difficult crisis, when they themselves have deliberately to will the right and God. Even when the training and example have been perfect, and when the natural character is specially good."²

We need spend little time on psychology as the suggested remedy for the deep needs of human personality. It has undoubtedly helped us to understand ourselves better. A psychiatrist or psychoanalyst with a real experience of Christ (and there are very few of them in this country, at least) can be of immeasurable help with cases of mental and emotional disorder. But psychology is better on analysis than on synthesis: better on diagnosis than on cure. Of itself, it has, of course, no adequate emotional centre round which to organize the life. The damnable process of making the psychologist himself this centre defeats its own end. Nothing but God is ever adequate as a final rest for the human emotions. Some time ago in Switzerland, two psychoanalysts sent to a meeting of the Oxford Group one of their most hopeless patients, whom they had felt unable to help. The man was not only converted but cured, and went back and converted the doctors, convincing them that he had found the answer to human needs. One of the doctors said later, "We discover and reveal, even expose the soul, but we cannot help a man or woman in a positive way. I believe

² *Letters to a Niece*, p. 116.

the Groups have found the answer, and it is from God Himself." He now declares that he runs all his interviews with patients on guidance.

We are thinking about living in touch with people, with a view to drawing them to Christ. And our first necessity is to win their initial attention. The average Christian worker has never learned to do that effectively. They ask people straight off to come to a Bible Class, or they hand them a tract, or they drag them off to church. This sort of thing has made evangelism a stench in the nostrils of many people.

What really gets people at the outset? Only one thing—experience told with humour and enthusiasm. The ordinary processes of friendship must build sufficient confidence first, but the first gun to fire is a piece of news. It will probably be the story of your own experience of Christ as you feel guided to tell it, adapted all the while to the sort of person you are talking to. It might be the story of someone else whose situation is more nearly parallel than your own. The Gospel was originally "news," not "views." Nothing is more symbolic of what has happened to Christianity than to see a metropolitan daily on Monday morning with a page devoted to sermons, all the articles being the reports of somebody's ideas. If there is any news, it is news about a church-building or the raising of some money, or where some worthy is preaching. I'd like to see a newspaper with imagination enough to run a page a week of changed lives. But if they are to do it, the Church has got to get busy and produce changed lives, and in unlikely orders of

society, before the newspapers can be expected to take any notice of it. We shall not capture again the attention of the world until we begin to touch difficult, typical, strategic, unlikely people for Jesus Christ. Where you can tell a church, or an individual, a story like that, you will invariably get attention. This news is news indeed.

God has hid the hunger for Himself so deep within the human heart that you can always count on response to this sort of thing. It may be the response of attraction, or it may be the response of repulsion—but there will be response all right. Why should the peaceable Gospel ever produce repulsion? Go back to the New Testament, and ask Peter and Paul. The opposition began as soon as the Gospel began. The reason is not far to seek. Religion never asks anything less than all we have. If we take God, He takes all there is of us. And while a certain amount of religion is a very nice thing to have, a full experience of it can be very upsetting to one's plans. People know that by instinct. That is why some of them do not want religion to come too close to them. If they react negatively in this way, they will reveal themselves in four ways: by ridicule, by silence, by violence, and by much talk. I know a man who is making all the trouble he can for his minister, because his minister is preaching uncomfortably vital sermons: I know that man's problems, and his fear is well founded, that if religion ever got going in his life it would change him and clean him up from head to foot. Many Christians are so sentimental and blind that they do not understand opposition of this

sort, and wonder whether the minister has not been too "hard." That kind of opposition is a divine thermometer to measure the spiritual vitality of the Church.

We need always to remember that opposition is only an indirect manifestation of spiritual hunger, as it was in Saul of Tarsus. Many of these people who at first oppose, will later accept, provided we see through them, let them get away with nothing, and at the same time love them and pray for them. The way they behave during this period of conviction is admirably set forth in a book which I hope you will all read, A. J. Russell's *For Sinners Only*, the chapter on "The Stung Conscience." You will see some of your acquaintances in that chapter. And some of you will see yourselves at certain times.

But if their interest is directly aroused, people will begin to ask questions and open doors that mean they want more. We need enough background of stories to give a certain atmosphere to the conversation. This helps to define our terms, not in precise descriptions, but rather in pictures—so that the conversation does not go off into discussions of small points related to quite different religious conceptions. Unless this background is drawn in sufficiently clear outlines, you will get a tendency to argue. John Wesley's words here are admirable: "I will studiously avoid controverted points, and keep to the fundamental truths of Christianity: and if any still begin to dispute, they may, but I will not dispute with them." The wisdom in that sentence is in the phrase "they may." One can almost


see John Wesley sitting polite but unco-operative, while they ventilate some minor objection: and then bringing the conversation back to the "fundamental truths." In our day, I think it better if we keep to fundamental *experiences* first, and let the truth follow: for truth in religion is experience rationalized, and theology always ought to come in its fullness only after experience.

There is a fairly clear groundwork of the course which interviews ordinarily take. When this sort of confidence has been won, the next step is the step of sharing. Sin begins to be seen in a very practical way, as the distance between where this person is, and the ideal life in Christ which in his heart he envies and would like to have. Some say that to face sin is morbid: but there is certainly nothing morbid, there is only common sense, in trying to reduce the ground between oneself and what one would like to have, or to be. It might be morbid to face sin if we had no cure: but we have the Cure. As sin begins to come out, and especially as this person comes nearer to God, the "exceeding sinfulness of sin" will appear; but you cannot expect men and women today to face their sins at the start in the light of a full theology. They do not know any theology, most of them hate theology. They will never see what the meaning of your theology is, until you bring your orthodoxy to life by experience. Dozens, hundreds of people that I know have come to a firm faith in the divinity of Jesus, in the Atonement of His Cross, who could never begin upon an authoritarian basis.

Let us, then, begin practically with sin, and let us

help them to get it all out. We have already spoken at some length about sharing, and need not to do so again. But let me say only one thing: the failure of religious workers to take sufficient time to help people to share everything, and their failure to share themselves in equal and humble fellowship, has damned despair and unbelief into more people than the activity of all the atheists. Who ever heard of a doctor who began his cure before he found out what was the matter! Yet hundreds of ministers are dealing in "cure-Christianity," which means the recommendation of solution before one knows the problems. You will never do effective work with individuals unless you have first fully caught their attention and made them want what you have; and unless next you have learned the secrets of their lives, and they have told you what kind of people they are underneath where most people do not see them. A minister I know in college work once told me, "When fellows slip away with me and tell me things they have never told any one else, that is chapter one verse one. All the rest is preface."

But clearly the sharing of needs is not enough. There must be a decision in which the will gathers up the facts which the mind has collected, and the aspiration the heart has felt, and packs them into a moral choice. This is the act of self-surrender which is man's part in his own conversion, the step which puts him in position to receive the grace of God which alone converts. For countless thousands of Christians, conversion is an experience at which they look with mystification from a distance. St. Paul was converted, and



there was a drunk somewhere in a rescue mission that they have heard about; but such things simply happen in the Providence of God, and for our part we seem to have nothing to do with it. I believe that is not Christian teaching. The "whosoever" of the Gospel means that there is a moral and spiritual prerequisite that any one can fulfil, and having done so, may expect the grace of God to change the life. Surrender is a handle by which an ordinary person may lay hold of the experience of conversion. It is the first step, the step of the will. In order to make surrender the decision of the whole life, and not merely the emotion of a moment, it needs to be filled with practical content: we must help people to see just what they are surrendering to God, their fears, their sins, most of all their *wills*, putting God's will once and for all ahead of every other thing. When these items are cleared through talking and sharing, they can be lumped together, and with the self flung out in abandon upon the mercy and the power of God. Some weeks ago, an advertising man in New York, with an exceptionally good mind, who had read volumes on metaphysics and the relation between science and religion, told us that the great thing he had gotten from a house-party was that, while all his reading and study had been theoretical and preparatory, now he found that "if he went home and confessed his sins to his wife, and got on his knees and surrendered himself to Jesus Christ, the whole thing would begin to work." That is the secret which many Christians desperately need to learn. It all begins with one comprehensive act.

There is the need for rededication day by day, hour by hour, by which progressively, in every Quiet Time, the contaminations of sin and self-will are further sloughed off (for they do have a way of collecting) and we are kept in fresh touch with the living Spirit of God. A further surrender is needed when and whenever there is found to be something in us which offends Christ, or walls us from another. We shall need, in this sense, to keep surrendering so long as we live. But I should also like to say that something happens the first time the soul says "Yes" to God with its whole force, that never wholly disappears. As terrible sin does something to the human heart which may be forgiven, but yet leaves its trace, so, thank God, does tremendous surrender leave such an ineradicable mark. We may need to extend this experience—we do not need to repeat it except where we have deliberately gone back on it. I believe that with a God of love, there is no limit to the number of times we may come back to Him in surrender, provided only we mean it and are penitent for the past.

We are building a solid spiritual roadway under people's feet. If we have come thus far with them, they have got a good start. And there are four next steps which they will need if they are to keep travelling.

The first is their daily Quiet Time. At the beginning it will be simple, perhaps. They will need constant help, suggestions about how to study the Bible, where and what to read in it. For most the Gospels will come first—and do not forget that in these days the majority of people need elementary A B C's. I have dealt in the

past few months with two cultivated families, and one the widow of a clergyman; and I had to give Bibles to both families, there were none in the houses! Donald Carruthers' pamphlet on *How to Find Reality in Your Morning Devotions* has helped hundreds in this early stage: I was with him in China in the days when he was working out this pamphlet in the laboratory of experience, and I know it is born of experiment and not theory. There will be a constant tendency to drop back from the full faith that God's Holy Spirit can guide, and to say that the Bible is enough, or prayer is enough. "I don't get guidance as you do," is apt to be the excusing phrase at such times: and we need gently but lovingly to find out why—and get at the pride of feeling exceptional or the disobedience to some earlier guidance or the strained relationship out of which this doubt springs, and help in the re-surrender of the problem. A full-orbed Quiet Time means Bible study, prayer, ample time to wait upon God in quiet, writing down what is given to us, and perhaps the sharing of what has come to us with those who are closest to us—certainly with husband or wife, or with one or more of the "spiritual family"—of which more later. We should come out from a Quiet Time with no barriers, ready to right any wrongs, with a guided plan for the day, with a feeling of being buoyed like a ship which has slid down the ways and is steaming out to sea. There are no people who "cannot get guidance" except those who will not, or have not fulfilled the conditions. I believe that there will be spiritual stagnation somewhere if the full New Testament experience of

the Holy Spirit is not an abiding reality to us, and to all whom we help.

We never can get away from our triangle: and the health of our relation to God will be partly dependent upon integration in a guided group, often called a "spiritual family." There are no rules for its composition; only they must be changed people, who feel guided for a certain period of time to live in close co-operation and fellowship with each other, sharing plans and needs, vision and sins, living in the light with one another. This is not a committee, it is not a party for mutual enjoyment: it is an opportunity to ring our own spiritual experience against the touchstone of others', and find the alloy in it, with a view to removing it. There was in the Early Church something called the "*koinonia*," the fellowship. Its precise relation to the *ecclesia*—the Church—is not known. It appears to have been made up of the same persons, it almost looks like another name for the Church in some places: but why did they make the distinction? I think it was because this was some sort of informal gathering, different from a church-service. Probably they had such wonderful fellowship together that they actually clung together far beyond occasions of formal worship. Christians have always known and met this need when Christianity was alive and shining. And such gatherings have always been characterized by love, honesty, challenge, prayer and intimate spiritual fellowship. At the first, this kind of intimacy is apt to be grasped at because it offers prospect of steadiness and permanence: but we all find sooner or later that

the discipline involved in letting others have a real share in our inner life, in our decisions, values, needs, is inconvenient and often most upsetting. Here is one of the realest danger-points of the human soul after conversion. Even some of us who have been converted a good while find this step a most difficult one to take. Yet how can spiritual fellowship stop short of it without slipping down into the sentimentality of a mutual admiration society? I know nothing that modern Christians, spoon-fed on subtle if not blatant individualism from their birth, more need as a corrective than just this kind of a spiritual family. If we are deeply and permanently to help people, we must see to it that they have such a family as this—it may begin with ourselves only, but must go forward to include others. Such a group as this must itself grow by infiltration from other groups more advanced; else we shall only organize a series of pockets where spiritual life is lost instead of developed. It is the want of this sort of first-hand touch with people spiritually in earnest, the complete absence of such a thing in the average parish, that accounts for the number of conversions which “do not last,” and it is not that the conversions were themselves mere emotion.

Another necessity for the continuation of the spiritual life in those we help is that they shall begin to help others. It is hard to get people to the place where they have spiritual children: but we ought not to be satisfied with them till they have spiritual grandchildren also. It will frankly not be enough to urge people to busy themselves in some kind of “service” as an ex-

pression of their new-found spiritual life. I know churches that have murdered the new life in some of their people by putting them on lifeless committees and expecting impersonal work out of them, when what they needed was to be sent after people in spiritual need. There are plenty of preachers who are ready to grab every new convert they can find, and immediately make a parish pack-horse out of them! A vestry, session, or board of deacons is not often a good training school for a man after he has been converted: and the ladies' aid and the sewing guild and the supper committee will usually have very little understanding of what to do with a woman for whom Christ has recently become a tremendous experience. Not that these things do not have to get done in the Church: but that they usually bear no relation to the sustaining of deep religious experience. We have expected too little of our people, and they have met our expectations. They would have learned more about theology by trying to answer the question someone else asked them than by all our Sunday evening addresses on the Apostles' Creed. They would have thought their way through many more practical and theoretical problems if we had set them out after the village sceptic, than by studying the big book on religious fundamentals we offered them. They would have seen their own shortcomings, their talkativeness, their domination, their lack of guidance, much better in the mirror of lives they touched or failed to touch, than in any abstract talk about them. We ought to seek lives for Christ for the sole motive that He and they need each other:

but for the moment I am thinking of the effect which it has upon us to be thus in creative contact with people, the way in which it fortifies and sustains those who have been changed themselves if they are used to help in the change of others.

The theme of this address is enough to take up a couple of books, and not the talk of an hour. But there are a few more things which I must say.

The first is that most Christian workers have frankly lost touch with the pagans and sinners. They are stamped and marked, and the outsiders think that such people have no understanding of sinners and unbelievers like themselves. I feel minded to urge you all to win back that contact by every means possible. Jesus was always at home with sinners, and they with Him: and He could never have changed them if He had not known how to play on their territory, and been a long way from the Puritan notion that they are to be avoided as unclean. The clothes of some Christians are dowdy and put people off: it is neither piety nor frugality which makes them so, but sloppiness and carelessness. Terminology kills a great deal of religious work: the terms are stilted, technical, pious, and drive off the people who most need touching. Let us develop a natural vocabulary that puts religious ideas into ordinary language. The wider the circle of life with which we are in touch, the more people we know, places we have been, ideas we have had, the more will we be able to be "all things to all men." Nobody knows much about touching people who has not had a chronic drunk to deal with, and a few frank

pagans. Now you do not need to have been a drinker nor a pagan yourself to get at these people: I think of a person like Miss Amy Wilson Carmichael, in South India, reaching godless business men and bandits in the hills, and she is an elderly English saint and writer who has, I suspect, been a Christian all her days—but the adventure of her life draws these people. Think always of this question when you estimate your own conversation with pagans: “If I were this person, would the witness I am giving convert me?”

The next thing is that there are no exceptions from the call to do this kind of work. Most of us began with a thousand excuses. We were too reticent, too young, too old, too busy—and then we found that what we meant was that we were too lazy, too selfish, too self-indulgent, too set in our ways. The real truth is that the depth of an experience of Christ may be measured by our inability to keep still about it. The real thing overflows. When a person finds Him fully, they have a message about Him for other people. I think of a woman brought up in a High-church atmosphere, where the priest must do everything and laymen must be docile and modest, telling me between puffs on her cigarette that she could never do *this* kind of work. I just had a telephone call from her in the hotel room to which she is confined most of the time, incurably cheerful, gay as a lark, a transformed personality in Christ, witnessing day by day to employees, guests, friends, about what has come into her own life. She no longer thinks about exemption, she thinks about chances. Of course she finds them, and then she im-

proves them. Let us have done with our excuses, and find out what it is in us that is holding us up.

It is no business of ours to choose whom we shall lead to know Christ. We need to be ready to establish contact with any one, however unlikely. There is no more stiff "technique" about this than about anything else in the Christian life. Guidance is the answer. You may be a grey-haired woman, and be used to bring a flapper to Christ. You may be a college undergraduate, and help a minister to find his message. Some complain of being where they have few contacts, but if we have the power of the Holy Spirit, God will provide the contacts. We shall be often amazed at the way God offers spiritual chances to those who are spiritually ready.

Lastly, let us never forget that "it is God that worketh in us, both to will and to do," and the energy and light which we need for this kind of work is a gift from God. Without guidance to initiate and continue it, we shall just be tinkering with human personalities. We shall grow confident of ourselves, like the apostles of old, and come crowing back to say to our Lord, "Even the demons are subject unto us," and He will have to restore our equilibrium by reminding us that we should not be proud of our spiritual prowess but thankful for our own salvation. The demand is human heart-hunger. The supply is the grace of God. We are only distributors. But we bear in our hands the most precious possession that can belong to any man.

God help us to give freely, as He has given to us.

V

THE GENIUS OF FELLOWSHIP

FELLOWSHIP, in the spiritual sense, means the intimacy which springs up between human beings who are agreed as touching a spiritual ideal which they are working out together. Second only after the hunger for God comes the hunger for comradeship with others who are hungry for God. Vital religion has always provided it. Dead religion drops it off and never misses it. But when religion comes to life again, the desire for fellowship revives with it.

It is terrible to consider the debasement of the word "fellowship." It is one of the noblest words in the New Testament; and yet in common church-parlance it may mean anything from true aspiration after the Communion of Saints, to the solemn sentimentalities of moribund prayer-meetings, or the rowdy back-slapping of young people's get-togethers. But it is the classical word for the thing which we mean: and we shall continue to use it, hoping to fill it once more with genuine content and to help give it back the glory which it had when Christianity was young.

We have already spoken of the "*koinonia*" and the *ecclesia* in the New Testament. Whatever the distinction between them, if any was indeed intended, one of the fruits of their common experience of Christ and the

Holy Spirit was intense spiritual fellowship. We need little imagination to see what lay behind such words as these:

"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and the fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. . . . And all that believed were together and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."¹ . . . "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all."²

Here was a mighty group-movement. These were not individual men and women each of whom had been separately fired with enthusiasm for Jesus and His cause; they had been melted and fused into one corporate organism, which St. Paul called, with intense emphasis upon its solidarity, "the body of Christ."

Not only was this an experience of fellowship between individuals, but groups in different localities were in touch with groups in other places. Harnack tells us "how vital was that intercourse, personal and epistolatory and literary, between the various churches,

¹ Acts 2:42 to end.

² Acts 4:32, 33.

and also between prominent teachers of the day. It is not easy to exaggerate the significance of this fact for the mission and propaganda of Christianity. The co-operation, the brotherliness, and moreover the mental activity of Christians are patent in this connection, and they were powerful levers in the extension of the cause. Furthermore, they must have made a powerful impression on the outside spectator, besides guaranteeing a certain unity in the development of the religion and insuring the fact that when a Christian passed from the East to the West, or from one distant church to another, he never felt himself a stranger.”³

But what a long tumble it is to come down from this to the modern Church, of which John Wesley complained in his day, “Look east, west, north or south, name what parish you please, is Christian fellowship there? Rather, are not the parishioners a mere rope of sand? What Christian connection is there between them? What intercourse in spiritual things? What watching over each other’s souls?” The language is quaint and eighteenth-century: but the search is eternal. The usual congregation, or group of ministers, is a rifted thing, as uncemented as the checkers on a board.

Pitiful are the substitutes by which Christians seek to find fellowship—as pitiful as the rounder who drowns his loneliness or self-consciousness in beer or whiskey, dropping off his masks with a fellow-drinker, but finding no fellowship while he is sober. Here are some of our modern substitutes for fellowship:

³ Adolph Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity*, Vol. I, p. 375.

The men's meeting in the parish. Did you ever see such a lot of inactive sponges, expecting something to be pumped into them week after week, by somebody who has been begged or hired to give them a talk, while they sit fish-eyed and lifeless on the benches and wait for the coffee? Or, if they come from a little better cut, they are very busy with the committees and the minutes and the dues and the debate at the meetings. Or maybe there is quite an elaborate educational or entertainment programme planned. It all comes to about the same thing. I have seldom found a clergyman who was not wearied to death with the futility of the whole procedure. Bring a new convert, on fire for Christ, into this refrigerator, and you may be sure what will happen to him, unless he himself sets about to change the atmosphere. Could anybody possibly call this fellowship?

For the clergy, there is the clerical club. It may be exclusively Methodist, or Presbyterian, or Episcopalian—or it may be broad-minded and take in everybody. But in character it is a kind of ecclesiastical Kiwanis or Rotary—and I can give you the programme for nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand meetings—there is the “paper,” and the lunch, and the chatter about who will be minister of this and bishop of that, and the resolution to thank the ladies, and the speaker after lunch (the apologetic fellow who did not want to drag in finances but couldn't miss so good a chance), and the air possibly blue with smoke—and then home. Isn't it all tragic—and almost all of us hungry enough for real fellowship with somebody to

give our skins for it? There were defeated men around that table, there were men miserable in their work, and men who knew that their success was only a climbing above the rest of their colleagues, and men who ached to be real but were prevented by the ecclesiastical chit-chat and gossip and professional manner and the empty laughter. How I have suffered at these things, and so have you. It is all such a travesty of fellowship.

Then there are more extended conferences for ministers. We listen to distinguished divines speak upon some phase of our work. I am afraid the professional aspect of it often gets into them, and they give us a best "effort," perhaps a sermon touched up. Sometimes it is an intellectual feat, interesting but remote from our actual needs. Any suggestion that we might improve in our work is made with some caution, as calling in question our sincerity. My own experience of these conferences is that they are too tame, they do not take the bull by the horns, they do not get deep enough to meet the real needs of ministers. What good is a fine address, and one or two new ideas, and a helpful theological suggestion, and a few days of superficial fellowship with one's cloth, when what you and I are up against is bringing life to dying men and women, wrestling to beat down Satan in human lives, at warfare with the world and the flesh and the devil for the souls of human beings? I have seen conferences take a real turn somewhere, when a man dared to be himself and confess his failures; but the chairman was sure to bring it back to trivialities again. It is so easy to let

people down out of the misguided kindness of our hearts. At a meeting last winter, an able, sincere minister stood up and said that he had never had a genuine experience of Christ so that he knew Him in a personal relation. After this someone began to let him down by telling the group how beloved he was in his parish, how wonderful his church-school was, his clubs, his parish visiting, etc. He showed no false humility, but replied, "What lack I yet?" He said he wanted power to bring someone else to Christ, and *to know* an experience of Christ. Both these things were mere words to him, but were steadily becoming a deeper need for him and his people than the best-run parish.

And there is one more substitute: membership in an organization to defend a point of view. It may be deliberately controversial, or even political: but at its best it means to uphold the position of some party within the church. The world befuddled as to what it can believe about God, life, the world, death—and we busy being Catholics, or Evangelicals, or Modernists, or Fundamentalists, or some rarified variation of one of them! I know that all of us must stand somewhere ecclesiastically or theologically. I hold a position with regard to these matters in which I believe both by training and by intellectual conviction. Fellowship means such unity in great essentials that secondary convictions assume their proper place. I find spiritual fellowship with surrendered, guided people in so many various camps that I seldom wish to obtrude a point of view which may be only divisive. I have not time to align myself with any group who think that by the

promulgation of a point of view they are going to save the world. And there is no time for any activity in the ministry today which is not directly concerned with saving the world. A man who is winning lives to a vital and saving experience of Jesus Christ will give organizations like this a very scant portion of his time. But they will become one of the first emotional refuges into which he will retreat when he is out of spiritual power. They will provide him with a kind of bastard-fellowship which will comfort him with the poor comfort that he "belongs." Nothing that we can join by signing a piece of paper or a check will probably save us, or save the world.

Now what is real fellowship? The core and genius of real fellowship, as I see it, is the power to live and work with people upon a basis of absolute love and honesty. I know of no human society on earth where that combination is possible. Love usually means the sentimental unwillingness to be honest: honesty usually comes after the forsaking of love. What we need is to keep them poised in balanced power, each controlling the other. Nowhere but in Christian fellowship is love so deep that it will suffer, or challenge, as need may be, so wide that it will include all who accept the terms of spiritual fellowship, so patient and durable that it will work and wait for any necessary change in another and never let him go. Nowhere else is honesty so tempered with love that it can be both frank and gentle, born not of criticism towards another but of candour about oneself, and tested by a rich group-experience so that it partakes in no wise of personal spite or dogmatism.

Fellowship is the lending of one's life to the brotherhood of Christ. It is living in the absolute open with men and women who live in the open with us. It means the sharing of sins, feelings, plans, mistakes, possessions, with those who can be trusted to help us in the maximum stewardship of these things. We all long for people with whom we can live upon such a basis as this. Many of us have said that this is crying for the moon: but, just the same, deep in our hearts, very near the place where we long for God Himself, we long for human fellowship like this—not personal and possessive with one person, but impersonal and guided with those we are led to as a spiritual family. We long for such fellowship, with God and His power and His love and His grace all shot through it. I have found a fellowship like that, and I want to tell you something of what I think it does for the Christian life.

— Upon the simplest plane, fellowship floats us above loneliness and discouragement. When someone has embarked upon the Christian way of life in dead earnest, he is likely to find himself somewhere cut off from the kind of satisfactions he used to enjoy. There are great compensations and the new adventure is more than a match for the old life: but there may be feelings of isolation and even sometimes of depression. Enough of these following one another can destroy faith and throw us back into scepticism and perhaps into sin. It is very different if there is one person, or a group of persons, to whom we can go and ventilate these moods and difficulties, finding them sympathetic and not shocked, ready to tell us how they met such things,

with whom he can have prayer and perhaps a good laugh, and come away in spiritual trim again.

Fellowship is the one thing that can get at and cure the fundamental sin of pride, which takes the concrete form of liking to be basically independent. It is a great step forward when we are willing to be independent of the unconverted crowd: but it is an even greater step for some of us to integrate ourselves once more with the converted crowd, so that our lives are lived communally. Protestantism especially has put great store by individualism, and only fellowship can ferret out the selfishness which is often the core of that. We have been brought up to go our own way, make up our own minds, live our own lives, think our own thoughts: and now, with some historic perspective on Protestantism, we see how disintegrating all this may become. For not only has Protestantism split and splayed into scores of unrelated denominations: it has splayed into about as many shivers as it has church-members. There is a kind of co-operation between individuals which leaves them basically, inwardly independent: we need the kind of co-operation which welds them into an eternal and unbreakable spiritual family and army.

Let me give you an illustration. Last spring a capable professional woman, who has given her life in human service, and for about a year has been a surrendered Christian, came to me and said, "I am stuck. I am standing still in the Christian life. What is my next step?" Now for years she has played a "lone-wolf" game, helping hundreds of people along profes-

sional lines, but allowing no one else even a look-in on her work. One can grow tremendously selfish about one's own form of unselfishness. I said to her, "Do you know what I think you need? I think you need to go out and get hold of three Christian women (whom I named), who have not made a professional success like yours, and whom therefore you incline not to listen to, but who have a much deeper experience of Christ than you have, and ask them to come in and be a spiritual family to you." She was amused and annoyed: it touched an unsundered spot. But she said she thought it was just what she needed. I added, "It will be good for you to telephone them yourself and ask them." She did it. And the jolt which it gave to her unrecognized pride to get just the help she needed from those women, the merging of her life with theirs (and through them with the larger fellowship), the termination of the cat-that-walks-alone principle in her life, has carried her leagues beyond where she ever was before. But you know as well as I that the average Christian never has a "stretcher" like that applied to his soul.

Third, fellowship provides the climate in which group-guidance for the individual becomes natural and right. It is a fact, whether we like to face it or not, that others see us better than we see ourselves. For those outside of Christ this usually means criticism behind our backs, and pleasant words to our faces. But in Christ it means love all the time, and honesty to our faces. There are sins of which we remain quite unconscious until close fellowship brings them to light

—sins like wilfulness, secretiveness, emotional refuges, subtle forms of selfishness, moodiness. The shared life means the exposed life—exposed not to the world but to the spiritual family—and this means that we expect our fellows to help us to eradicate our sins and to go forward to maximum Christian service. The hardest thing to surrender to God is *plans*: most of us like to live by schedule, and we are willing to let God have the spirit if we can keep the arrangements. If I am sure of one thing it is that we do not know whether we are surrendered to God or not until we submit ourselves to the regimen of a disciplined, guided group of His people: and into this submission go our plans, as well as our sins. Their impartiality makes them free of personal bias, and more open to God's full plan. The guidance of a welded group about an individual member of it will be found harmonious, when all the facts are known to all, and guidance is sought by fully surrendered people. In the long run and as touching a major decision, it must check with the individual involved, and he must himself feel it is right: but we need to be careful here that the individual is at his best, that he is in full fellowship with the "family;" or else he is likely to be caught in a mood of returning individualism once more.

Fellowship with a group also gets at the defects of our work for others. You have seen doctors who thought that everybody had incipient epilepsy, or some other ailment: who worked on tangents. We all tend spiritually to do that unchecked by the experience of others. There is a perfectly enormous amount of blind-

ness and sentimentality in religious people that simply must be got at: a good woman told me of a certain minister that "*he* didn't need to be converted—she knew him at the seminary, and he was a perfect *dear*." Well, he needed a hose and a broom on his soul while he was at the seminary. Sentimental men and women must be made knowledgeable about people, introduced gradually to facts about where they live and what goes on, and they will get this from the frank sharing of human problems in a group. Most ministers are appallingly unwary of the needs of their people—they see the surface need, but not what lies behind it. This sort of diagnosis can only come as the mounting accumulation of experience in a group is put at the disposal of the individuals in it. You can't collect all this in big books or case-records: it is something which grows with one's own experience. We all have a tendency, in spiritual things as in biological, to reproduce our own deficiencies in our offspring, to bring about conversions with our own characteristic defects. The rounding-out of incomplete experience can best come as other lives are allowed to come in on the situation. An architect recently told me that he never let his work go out unless it was checked by another architect, because he could not see the defects of his own work. What might happen if our religious work were thus brought out from the safe privacy of our study, and compared and contrasted with that of men who were really changing people's lives and making of them life-changers in turn?

Again, one of the greatest needs in our day is for

the reproduction of Christian groups, united though widely scattered, such as Harnack describes in the early Church. Our theological and organizational disharmony is nothing compared to our practical disharmony: as things stand, no two churches or ministers strike in the same place, or repeat one thing often enough to get it into the mind of a seeker as being really necessary. One minister emphasizes the great need for intellectual reconstruction, and gives the seeker the impression that if only he will read the last big piece of apologetics, he will find his way to faith. Another emphasizes the social Gospel, tells him to forget his own soul, and get busy for the unfortunate. Yet another tells him to get on his knees and make his confession, receive instruction, be baptized and confirmed, and all will be well. Most ministers lend books because they will not share themselves. What is needed is a simple way of beginning and continuing fruitful contact with people, such as may be taken up again elsewhere by those in fellowship with us, though we may never have seen them. Precisely that is happening in the Oxford Group. A man came to Calvary Mission and got a challenge that he didn't want to face. He crossed the sea, and in Oxford fetched up at the house of a member of the Group, asking for a job. From that man he got exactly the same challenge as he got at Calvary Mission, and in exactly the same quarter of his life. How many of you would have listened if he made complaint that he was not treated right at the Mission, and not realized that all this was smoke-screen for healthy conviction of sin? Think, too, of

this as a means of continuance. As these Groups increase all over the world, and as people travel, the same message will come to them, in churches through different personalities, in groups through different types; but always it is the *same* thing, with its characteristic ring of joy and reality. I suppose this to be perhaps the greatest single strength of the Oxford Group, and it is certainly the factor which is making for its increase throughout the world. I think it especially encouraging at this time: for even the most inspired utterances and labours of individual preachers are isolated cries in the dark. Protestantism has no united voice, for we have no united movement which will first cure our selfish individualism, and then go to the world with a united, sizeable front. But it may be that in the present movement stimulated by the Oxford Group, Protestantism, and indeed all Christendom, will find the unity which it has lacked—a spiritual unity which arises from similar experience, interchange between groups, and a re-emphasis upon the things we all alike theoretically believe.

These groups are not always static in some one locality. Sometimes they become fluid communities on the march, travelling teams. According to the needs of the place or people to whom one is going, and according to the need of persons who need training, the teams are composed. It is quite a test to travel with people, and sometimes in this sort of detachment from home-ties and the refuge of customary responsibility, people will reveal needs that they do not ordinarily reveal, and these needs can often be met much better

in such a moving fellowship. The training which comes in such travelling work under mature leadership exceeds in intensity and depth any other kind of training which can be had. There are some people who will never take the final step of surrender and full integration in a group, which will get at the last vestige of self in them, until they have this further experience. The effectiveness of a team lies partly in its varied character. No one person quite presents the fulness of the message: and even if he does, there are often lacks in personality which are made up by other personalities of a different sort. Sometimes the value of a travelling team may be achieved by a local group going off together for a campaign in a nearby city. One has many times seen churches, homes, communities even, revolutionized by the visit of a travelling group living a guided fellowship life together with them for a few days.

I think that we have seen the advantage of a fellowship of people with whom we can "live in the light." The question immediately arises, How shall we create such a fellowship where we are? To do this with full effectiveness requires a maturity of leadership which can hardly be even sketched on paper. But we must deal with as much as we can.

Fellowship obviously begins guidedly between two people. We had better be specific here, rather than general. Last spring a young man went to live in a country community, working on a small farm. He had been in touch with the Group for some time, but had never taken any active leadership. One day he

was ill and had to go to the hospital in a nearby town. The minister of the village where he was working chanced to pay him a visit. From his bed this youngster was guided to witness to him of the change in his own life. The minister was interested. He wanted that kind of thing to happen to his young men. He shared with the boy in the hospital, they had prayer together, they afterwards met and talked often. They asked for guidance about others in the community. One by one, as led, they went after them. They picked up others wherever they fell into conversation with them. It was all adapted witness. We have all known ministers and laymen who did as much.

But they went farther: they not only created spiritual experience, they related it. These fellows were brought into touch with one another. A group was formed and is growing—but behind that there remains a small central spiritual family, where there can be perfectly frank sharing, checking, honesty, and the opportunity for unhindered open relationships. Without deepening fellowship in this family-group, the larger, open group will peter out. Not only this; but this little group in the country was related to a larger group in a city, and people went from the country to the city group, and people went from the city to the country group—so that there was ample opportunity to keep the new group up to the level of characteristic Group principles. If this interchange is not kept up, a small group will tend to grow isolated, stagnate, lose its flavour and power, and become just another religious “meeting” which will probably die its own death.

There have been several such demises, which any one could easily foresee. I know one minister who has won to initial decision scores and scores of young people, and these he has tried to "organize" into groups. But he has been too "busy" with other people to keep in touch with the leaders, or even to see that any one is being properly trained to lead; and he told me a little while ago that he felt they were all falling into a dead routine, and he knew that his work was failing. He has not learned the principle that quality is more important than quantity, that a small, live and continuing group is worth a dozen spasmodic flashes in the pan, that the relation of experience is as necessary as its creation, that every individual must be related not only to his or her small local group, but to a vital parent-group with more mature experience, if certain values are not to be lost.

When it comes to the relation between such groups as I have been describing, and the question, How may the Church take hold again? I think that it needs to be said that these groups probably have a better chance of interpreting the fundamental purpose of the Church to the kind of people who are no longer found within the range of its influence, than any power on earth. For in the movement of which I speak there is no separatist idea of substituting for the Church: only a re-emphasis upon the things which the Church itself believes and teaches; but these things must be put where the ordinary sceptic, critic, pagan, worldling can understand it. A church service may be the last place to take him while he feels as he does; but an

informal group, where people who have been like himself describe the way by which they travelled to a real experience of Christ, may be the first thing to whet his appetite and open his eyes. Hundreds of these people have found their way back into the churches, once they found out what the churches were basically driving at. Frankly the average person today sees no connection between sitting at a service, or paying to support the institution, and the solution of his own needs. The Church is in large part responsible for that. When the minister calls, he seems to have only two things in his mind: getting you to come to church, or giving him money for it. What if ministers tried playing on these people's own territory a little more, made friends with them, put the Church out of mind for the time, dealt with them as human beings, invited them to a group-meeting at somebody's house, and promised to do little talking themselves but to let others talk of their own experience—wouldn't it be a much better approach?

My friend the Rev. Charles Hastings Brown says, "The Church began to fail when it ceased being a group alert to the purpose of doing Christ's will, and became simply an institution." I think that an exact statement of the fact. We have taken what was meant to be a spiritual family-fellowship, and turned it into a business organization. If we are to turn it back again, it can be done in no wholesale way. No re-organization will do it, no campaigns of mass-evangelism, no quick-and-easy remedies. The cure lies in the rediscovery of fellowship under the guidance of God's Holy Spirit.

VI

THE NEW CHURCH

IF the principles which I have been trying to enunciate were made the working principles of our churches, what sort of churches should we have?

In general, our churches and parish-houses would be characterized, not by the bustling activity which has been using up our energy for some time past, but rather by the quiet peace of unhurried people with time enough for souls. The hum of the ecclesiastical wheels in some places, and the dead silence of empty idleness in others, would give way to the steady coming and going of people whose spiritual hunger had been whetted by a live church with a spiritually vital staff and membership, and who were now finding that the Church knew how to satisfy the hunger it had aroused for the living Christ. It is my personal conviction that, save in a very few places, the institutional church is as much a back-number as the stage coach: social agencies are for the most part better trained and equipped to do what the institutional church was once needed to do. The really "new" church, the church which is truly advanced and abreast of the times, is not the one that has caught up either to the intellectual or the social demand of ten to twenty years ago, but the one that has caught up to the intensely personal demand

of this present time. I feel that any church which is putting its emphasis today anywhere else than on getting people into touch with the living God is frankly looking down the wrong hole, out of date, and blind alike to the danger and to the unparalleled opportunity of the present day.

This is going to mean a new ministry of men, intent not upon the maintenance of institutions, but upon the transformation of lives. Years ago when Edward Lincoln Atkinson was coming to New York to the rectorship of Epiphany Church, he had a letter from Dr. Donald, who followed Phillips Brooks at Trinity Church, Boston, in which he said:

“We ministers are tempted to work for the salvation of parishes: it is a mistake. Our sole endeavour should be to labour for the salvation of souls; that is, the upbuilding of individual lives. If the parish, as a parish, prospers, so much the better; if it does not, it is not significant. The decay of the parish is nothing: the strengthening of weak wills, the illumination of dim consciences and the inspiration of hopeless people means everything.”

That is strong, but it is true; and we shall not get a new church till we begin to believe it, and to build on this principle.

Clearly, if dealing with people one by one, and relating these people to one another in a sharing fellowship, is to be the chief characteristic of our ministry, we shall need assistance. I want now to talk about the staff of the new church. It will come guidedly from amongst those who have been helped by the message to a richer experience of Christ. No training in semi-

naries or other schools can take the place of the kind of identification and unity which springs out of similar experience. During the past seven years between thirty and forty people have been members of our staff at Calvary Church, New York; and all of them are people who have either been first brought to Christ, or else have been greatly helped forward in the Christian life, through the work itself. Unless you have this kind of loyalty to start with, you will get divisiveness, cliques, disunity later on. There is something wrong when religious work does not raise up its own characteristic leadership. There will be danger of being premature in asking men or women to join your staff: we want seasoned people, and only those we are surely guided to ask. The question will arise concerning money: some of us come from churches where salary budgets are small, and should not be increased. How can we pay their salaries? Well, some people ought to work with us part time and live upon other sources of income. But there are always people with enough income to carry them, and a few people (*very* few) who should live on faith, and these will often be guided to come on the staff at their own expense. To cite the instance I know best, we have had in all twenty-six full-time volunteer workers at Calvary the past seven years, glad to pay their own way and give thanks with their lives for what Christ has done for them. Our salary budget has been increased by only a few hundred dollars. We divide the administrative work amongst us, so that everyone has some definite parish responsibility: but this, being so distributed, is not so

heavy that it does not leave the bulk of our time free for individuals. On almost any afternoon you can walk through Calvary House, and find three to seven interviews going on. The majority of these workers, of course, are laymen and women. The advantage of having them all live in one house is obvious: but where this is not possible, a daily family Quiet Time before work begins, where personal rather than routine matters are foremost, will provide the constant interchange which means fellowship and teamwork. If you deal faithfully with people, and give them the full experience of Christ and the Holy Spirit which they need, you will find yourself raising up right hands on all sides, who will set you free for direction and larger planning, and give you ample time to keep in touch with other individuals yourself. This is the cure, both for the over-driven parson with "too much to do to have time for people," and also for the constitutional lone-wolf who loves to do everything himself—and that means a great many clergy and bishops whom I know, who need nothing so much as they need steady, frank fellowship with spiritual equals who will be honest with them about the egotism of their leadership.

What becomes of parish organizations on this basis? The useful ones stay, the dead ones go. We have only scrapped one since we came to Calvary. There are conventional church-people, who think of the church as services and guilds; and unless or until they move beyond that stage, their service will be found in the useful work of parish societies. For some people parish guilds are second-best service, a real escape

from facing the full demand of Christ for their whole lives. So far as possible, these societies must be infiltrated with spiritual vitality, and their members helped to see that nothing is really "service" for Christ which does not directly relate people to Him. Let us use these societies as contacts with such people, and bring them as far as they will go. I have seen at least one such organization move forward constantly in spiritual power under guided leadership, and begin to fulfil at home and at first-hand its original missionary purpose. Sometimes it is easier to raise money and say prayers that somebody else may be a useful missionary, very far away. We must carry our people beyond that, and let them see that if they are not winning the people in the next block, it is poor business to pray God that the missionary in Korea or the Argentine may be more successful. There are just as many insufficient reasons why it is hard to win somebody out there, as there are at home. The want in both places is a vital experience of Jesus Christ. The value of a parish organization lies in its power to produce or to increase that.

Some of you will be wondering what happens as to the raising of money on the basis of clear trust in God. I can only say that this is the only basis on which the truly "new" church will be run. Wherever that faith in God is a fact, with no anchors to windward in other human security, the money always comes. I know a church composed mostly of working people, where the Group movement has been at work for two years and a half. Many of the people have been unemployed re-

cently, and had little money to give. But last Christmas that congregation, which is not large, gave seven hundred dollars, and at Easter even more. One family where the boys had no underclothes or proper shoes gave sixteen dollars between them. Why? Because the minister there came back over two years ago from a house-party with a new message. Always beloved, he began to share his sins with his people. They began coming to him to talk. Desperate situations, broken homes, were healed, as if by miracle. Men stopped drinking, wives stopped gossiping, there was true awakening in that parish. Do you think that God or the people will let a man down who is leading work like this?

Now we need a whole new message about money—not only in our parishes, but in our general church organizations. I think there is a good deal of atheism in some of our missionary retrenchments of the past twelve months, though I believe the necessity to retrench has arisen through the gradual secularization of the missionary enterprise. Agriculture and hospitals and education make excellent forerunners and fellow-workers with evangelism: they make very poor substitutes for it. If more lives were being changed out on the missionary front, and we at home heard more about it, instead of hearing about the more impersonal humane service of increasing institutions, the money would come in more easily. I have seen missionary efforts which began in a blaze of true eagerness to bring men to Christ turn in less than thirty years into pure humanitarianism. We always *think* that is

going to bring in money from people at home who have a "broad-minded" view-point, and welcome the wider application of religion; but my own experience is that people believe in missions who believe in Jesus Christ, and give to missions where He is given full acknowledgment and where men are brought to Him. If the Church, all round the world, were fulfilling its main task, it would not lack for the wherewithal to carry on its work. Again I speak from experience; for even with extensive building, and a steadily increasing budget, and with a congregation no longer wealthy, we have been wonderfully cared for in our work at Calvary. The vestryman who has helped most largely said to me some years ago very simply, "Mr. Shoemaker, I do not believe in big institutions. I believe in man-to-man work. I think that is the way Christ worked, and it is the way your group is working; and I want you to know that I am prepared to back you in every way I can." Incidentally, I think the ordinary layman is much more eager for daring, guided leadership from us ministers than his cautious exterior sometimes indicates. Let us lift him up and sweep him along and convince him by what God does for us. The principle about money is: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." "Where God guides, He provides."

In the work for children is found one of the most glorious fields for this message. Children take to it like ducks to water. A few years ago we had a noisy, badly-behaved crowd of children, coming to church-

school because they were sent, or because they looked for the rewards at the end of the year. Slowly, guided and surrendered people were put in as teachers. One or two of them began having a Quiet Time at the beginning of the period with all the children waiting on God. They began to find that God spoke to them very clearly, so clearly that one of them said she was not going to listen any more because God always told her to help her mother with the dishes, and she wasn't going to do it! As a matter of fact, she changed her mind and it altered her relation at home. Another little girl, in the midst of Quiet Time, broke into audible prayer, "O God, please forgive me for taking the bun." After class her teacher waited to see if the child would tell her what had happened, and she did. "Mother sent me to the baker's to buy a loaf of bread. While I was there I took a sugar-bun off the counter." The child had already confessed to God. "What do you think you ought to do?" asked the teacher. "I ought to give it back," said the child, "but I can't 'cause I ate it." "What is the next best thing to do?" asked the teacher. "Pay for it," said the child. "Would you like me to go with you when you do that?" asked her teacher. Yes, she would. So they went both together and the child confessed and restored to the baker. I call that about as good a piece of individual work as I have ever known. No pressure, no horror or punishment, an honest recognition of sin, and full restitution. How many of us would have said "Naughty child," or told the parents and had her spanked, or done some other thing that was only adding

wrong to wrong, instead of clearing the matter in this guided way? I could tell you many such stories of the way in which this message has become vital, not only to the children, but through them to their parents. The whole aim is towards an experience of God which helps them where they are. The course of study is not unlike other courses, except in its personal emphasis, and in the fact that teachers share with children their own experience.¹

The services themselves will be more altered by the message inwardly than outwardly. Personally I believe in taking the church pretty much as we find it, using it for a cup, and then pouring fresh wine into it. There is no need for radical departure from custom, except in some special services. The more we can keep away from stunt-services and crack-brain "shows," the better. Personally I have no wish to change the dignity of an orderly, reverent service, and find that the service and the sermon supplement each other. Perhaps the chief difference will be in preaching. And I think that this will come, at first, by the telling of personal modern stories. Many ministers go back after a deeper surrender to Christ and witness to it in their own pulpits, sharing their own needs with their people, and inviting them to come for personal conferences. This element will continue to be a part of our preaching, and our illustrations will be largely made up of homely incidents in the lives of people we know, always being careful that they are kept anonymous, and that no

¹ I have already spoken of Miss Olive M. Jones' forthcoming book, *Inspired Children*.

confidence is betrayed. These stories cannot be made a substitute for a thought-through sermon, and the fact that we are growingly steeped in experience, as against reading only, should not lessen the quality of our preparation for preaching, and will not if we are fully guided. Guidance is of great importance in the choice and preparation of sermons. God will often suggest them in Quiet Times, and tell us when to preach them. The gathering of more and more human experience will, of course, also be a great feeder into the mind of ideas for sermons: and the problem will not be so much what to say as what to leave out. Most sermons will be sermons to individuals—not public hammerings, but talking aloud with a congregation about something that is on the mind of one we know, and therefore probably on the minds of many. Nothing keeps you so much in touch with currents of thought as talking with a lot of individuals: we need not wrestle much with the ones talked about in the books; but those that touch our people are our immediate concern. We shall get behind the thoughts to the causes: we shall know, for instance, that scepticism is inevitable in a sin-soaked generation, and begin to build faith by helping them to get rid of sin. Good sermons are born in Quiet Times and interviews.

Somewhere the new church will have a group for the sharing of experience, a working "*koinonia*." As those who are won increase, there will be the need for a meeting where they see and hear one another, where those who are discouraged are lifted up again, where those who have had victories can share them with

others, where new people can declare themselves. At the first this will be small. It grows out of changed lives. Beware of "starting a group." Convert people, and the group will develop as you relate them. Not until you are sure of your nucleus will it be wise to admit outsiders into the meeting; but when you are, it can be made known and people invited to come. Personal difficulties will be worked out between two people, or else in a smaller "family group:" this meeting will be frankly for the demonstration of God's power, for the help of those who come in need. It may well begin in a private house, and if it is held in a church-room, it should be clearly understood that it is inter-denominational—in fact, the less such lines are even suggested the better it will be. A Quiet Time some time beforehand will get direction for the leading of the meeting, for some who shall speak, for its main current. It will be a melting-pot for differing types, strata of society, nationalities, even, and the more so as the movement widens throughout the world. As leaders or others who have been changed drop in from time to time, they will serve to emphasize the world-wide character of the work, and keep the meeting from being local or parochial. This is apt to be the most important event spiritually of the week, outside of the actual services, and may supersede them unless they are kept vital under God. It will be found unwise to attempt to superimpose such a meeting upon an already existing one like Wednesday evening prayer-meeting. Begin anew at another time.

It will readily be seen that in such a church, the

minister's time will be principally given to four guided responsibilities: the training of his staff, work with individuals, calling and preaching. Briefly let me say a word on the first three.

Most large church staffs, and even small ones, are mere committees, meeting for the transaction of routine business: they ought to be families, meeting to know one another intimately, sharing up to date, insuring harmony and fellowship before all else; and only then coming to parish affairs, which in such an atmosphere will take much less time than when the staff was a committee. You cannot keep divisions, hurt feelings, misunderstandings out of a church staff on any other basis than sharing fellowship: and this must be led, and the pace set, by the minister himself, who must find and take and never skimp the time which that will take. The staff will not "stand without hitching"—they need growth, training, fellowship, if they are to do effective work with people, and if the staff is to present to the parish and the community any picture of a welded Christian society, as of course it should.

Only such a staff will insure the minister's freedom to trust much parish work to them, so that he is free to see people himself. His parishioners will want to see him. People from out of town will drop in and want a talk. There will be phone calls from people wanting spiritual help. One of the staff will feel that he can take someone they are helping a farther step. If he is pressed and rushed, he cannot do this work: or if he does it, he will seem harried and worn. Our

time face to face with people must be set round with ample leisure: though we have but half an hour, it must feel leisurely to us and to them. Some talks will require one or two hours—I have spent five.

It would be ideal if every minister could call on all his parishioners at least once a year. Many busy city men can do it no more often, but try to do as much. Where work with seekers grows all the time, the mere ringing of door-bells becomes an unguided waste of time. He will then go to the sick, to those in trouble, and to his new people. If he have other assistant ministers, they will go in his place, so that some of the staff is in touch with all of the people. But this needs to be done under guidance, or the calls will be as perfunctory as possible. There will be a percentage of calls where nothing perceptible happens spiritually: but as one is guided in this, there will be calls where real contact is made, where the atmosphere is not conventional but genuine, where needs will be talked out, decisions made, prayer said, guidance asked for, and inclusion in fellowship ensues. If you are one thing in the group-meeting or in the pulpit, and another thing when you call, your calls will lack power. People watch to see if you really live by all this guidance you talk about, and whether people like themselves can have such experiences as you describe. Your chance with them is when you meet them face to face in their own homes.

Briefly, then, a parish where this message is in full force would be wholly revolutionized. It would be a fellowship, a family, from end to end. Let a stranger

touch it at any point, and he will feel a spark like electricity—more human friendliness, more happiness, more inclusiveness towards the poor and the uninteresting, more faith in God, more downright spiritual adventure. There is no stiffness of clerical personality, no deadness of level in the parish as a whole, that cannot be transformed by such an experience of Christ as takes down the walls. There is no parish clique or division which cannot be healed if both sides are converted and share with each other guidedly. Where people refuse to be converted, you will get a falling away: but this is the only way I know to cut away dead wood in the church without endangering live wood also—to present so challenging a message that the spiritually earnest will take it, and the others would rather go where they hear softer words. I profoundly believe that the message which I have briefly sketched for you is the answer for dead and failing parishes, and for successful and worldly parishes. I believe it will awaken our local churches from the ministers straight on out through the laity.

Such a changed church will have certain larger implications which we must mention.

It will deal with the family problems of this day in the only way in which they can be effectually dealt with, viz., by changing the individuals in the family, and helping them develop a sharing fellowship at home. Human remedies for divorce go all round the necessity that if the marriage is to be re-made, the persons involved must be re-made first. Fundamental conversion of both parties is the essential element. We have all

seen marriages patched by human tinkering, where men and women came together again, only to find after a time that the same rubs arose, the same concessions and compromises were tried, and finally they had to abandon it. How can it be otherwise, until the people themselves are changed? We are seeing an increasing number of homes on the verge of wreck brought together again because both lives (not only the one which seems guiltier: the other usually has pride and self-pity to surrender) have been given to Christ. And the continuing of this new relation is dependent upon the family Quiet Time. Family prayers have gone by the board—they died of stiffness, paternalism and unreality; one person did it all, and the rest endured and then revolted. But family Quiet Times are informal, democratic, real, adventurous, everyone having a creative part who has paid the price of real fellowship and real guidance. In homes where this is the daily practise people are discovering whole new reaches of love for each other, understanding and co-operation; and such homes are becoming a leaven which is gradually setting a new standard for family unity. A kind of understanding is springing up between husbands and wives, between parents and children, which some had feared was gone forever—and without God, and wherever God is not, is still gone.

There are implications here, too, for education. With laws against the reading of the Bible in the public schools of some of our states, and the simply appalling ignorance of our youth about the most elementary principles of the Christian religion, we must

stop crying calamity and begin an effective demand upon our educational institutions, by parents, by the state, by Christian teachers, and by the students themselves, for something more than the history and theory of religion; for a real chance to work out religious experience, as they work out chemistry and biology, in the laboratory way. There is no detached method here possible: no theory talked by spectators will do the job; you must let loose on the campus experimental believers, whose lives of adventure and joy and sincerity will catch the imagination of undergraduates, as it has been captured in recent years in the University of Oxford by the group which in South Africa was given Oxford's name because of the young men who came pouring down into that country, transformed by the experience they had had at the university. The college chapel, courses in religion, undergraduate religious organizations, may have their place, but they are signally failing to capture the imagination of our youth in any large way. A spiritual movement which will vitalize the local churches and ministers, the college chaplain and his chapel, the professors, the undergraduates themselves, is needed. Thank God, it is in many places already at work and under way. Not the least of the effects of this movement may be the Christianization of our fundamentally pagan educational system.

Another great fruitage, already being recognized, is the meaning which such a movement within the churches has for church-unity. Great strides have been made in facing both agreements and differences

between the churches, in world-conferences on Faith and Order, and the impossibility of immediate federation is recognized. But we might achieve federation and still be disunited, as many of us within the same Christian body are really disunited from each other. The way to unity between churches is the way of unity between individuals. When I hear of an Anglo-Catholic bishop in Africa, laying his hands in blessing upon the head of a Boer of the Dutch Reformed Church as he takes his way to America to attend a Presbyterian Seminary—a Boer whose father before his conversion disliked all Englishmen, and one of whose best friends is now that bishop: when I know of a Disciples of Christ minister from the south journeying to a house-party and together with his family becoming so devoted to an Anglo-Catholic priest and his family that they stayed with him several days and found the deepest kind of fellowship: when I see men and women of every church gathering together in close fellowship, emphasizing those experiences which belong to us all but in which we have all been falling short alike, and going back more loyal to their own churches, but more understanding of people in others, then I know what made Bishop Roots, of Hankow, that apostle of Christian unity, say that he thought this movement was the spiritual force which was going to make unity possible. Could anything make for inter-church understanding like the infinite extension of vital groups of Christians from all the churches, clear round the world?

We are constantly exercised about where the leader-

ship for the Church of the next generation is coming from, about what kind of men are going into the ministry. Some are content if they can bring in a few natural leaders, men of born eminence and force, to offset some of the moth-eaten johnnies who appear to be descended from a long line of maiden aunts. But personality, natural leadership, good looks or good brains may only give a man the chance to fail at a somewhat larger job. What we need, of course, is converted men, men with an experience of Jesus Christ which has run clear down through their own lives, and which they know how to make fascinating and available to other people. We need men so converted that they may shake the seminaries, and challenge the men who in many instances are teaching them nearly everything one needs to know in the ministry except the one thing needful, which is the way to persuade men to take Jesus Christ for their Lord. That teaching can only come by doing it with them. Now from such a movement as the Oxford Group, scores, probably hundreds, of men have gotten their initial impulse towards the ministry. I think of an English business man in New York, in line for a large salary: he was changed, and began changing men. Later he asked me whether I thought he should go into the ministry; I told him to get his own guidance. He came one day to say that manufacturing was pretty dull beside changing people. The lure of the work which he had already begun drew him into the ministry—but he was changed first, got his message out of his experience, and so did not go dry in seminary nor stale when he got into a parish.

I am not afraid to trust the leadership of the Church to men like that.

How shall the new Church make its force felt in social questions? Clear through, by transformed personalities, not by any impersonal nostrums whatever. I have already spoken of racial results in a country like South Africa. Industry is being changed in exactly the same way, as employers and employees get together upon a basis of common need, common surrender to Christ, full sharing, and work out the question of wages, leisure, profit-sharing, housing and the rest, in guidance and in fellowship. It takes little imagination to see the international implications of a world-wide spiritual movement, and how it might easily consolidate the world of our generation as John Wesley consolidated the England of his. Imagine Geneva riddled, not with lobbyists even for great human causes, but with converted men and women alert to the Spirit and guided by Him in full fellowship with one another. With several house-parties already held there, and more to come, this is within the range of practical possibility. There is time only to touch these vast questions. Their solution is implied in a full conversion to Jesus Christ, but this must be carried much further than evangelicals have generally seen. There is no "social Gospel" separate from the whole Gospel of personal, national and world-salvation which is the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

It looks as though the revival long awaited is on the horizon, and as if the Oxford Group were the spear-head which opens its way. For a long time the Church

has been nearly as bewildered as the world. Nothing less than a God-inspired awakening, a "rushing mighty wind" from heaven, bearing upon its wings the fire of grace from the throne of God, is sufficient for the need of the world and the Church of this hour. Thanks be to God, the wind is stirring. There is "the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees." It appears that once more, as often before in the time of desperate human need, Almighty God is ready to refresh His Church and revive His world with a new grant of His Holy Spirit. I believe it to be utterly impossible much longer to hold back the tide of revival. A world which has once known the joy and peace of the Gospel of Jesus Christ will not long be content to remain morally and spiritually bankrupt, when help is within reach. But whether the Church is in the vanguard of this awakening, and is awakened by it; whether she will be herself sufficiently renewed to conserve and reproduce the miracles of changed lives which are increasing on all sides, by quickening her pace, changing some of her ways, deepening her experience of her Lord, and throwing herself more fully into His work of redeeming human personality—this is a question which the Church herself must answer, not by public pronouncement, but by the private decision of tens of thousands of her ministers and laymen. True revival has always come from unsuspected sources, always fooled the institutionalists and the intellectuals at first, always demanded of men that they see and judge for themselves apostolic authenticity by apostolic results. It is no day to quibble or trifle. The Church of this land must take

her opportunity while it is hers, or the day may come when, being found wanting like the Church in another land, she will lose the chance altogether. One informed and consecrated writer in Great Britain says that "life-changing on a colossal scale is the one hope of the world today."

God give us a new Church with every nerve stretched to this one supreme need of the world!

